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Friday
24 Feb. '95

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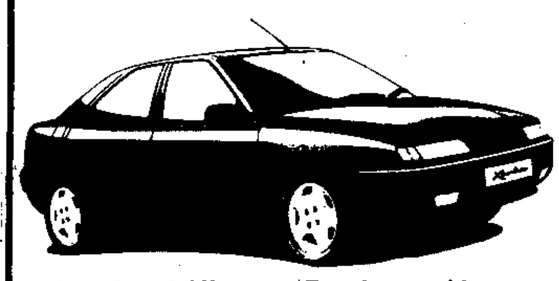

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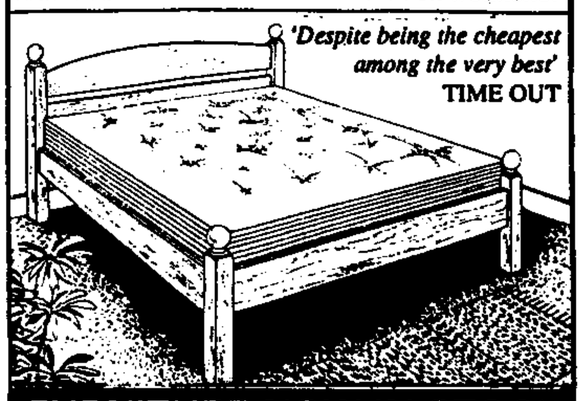

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A Startling Memory Feat That You Can Do

How I learned the secret in one evening. It has helped me every day.

WHEN my old friend Richard Faulkner invited me to a dinner party at his house, I little thought it would be the direct means of doubling my salary in less than two years. Yet it was, and here is the way it all came about.

Towards the end of the evening things began to drag a bit as they often do at parties. Finally someone suggested the old idea of having everyone do a 'party-piece'. Some sang, others forced weird sounds out of the piano, recited, told stories and so on.

Then it came to Peter Brown's turn. He said he had a simple 'trick' which he hoped we would like. First he asked to be blindfolded. Those present were to call out 25 random numbers of three figures each, such as 161, 249, and so on. He asked me to list the numbers in order as they were called.

Peter then astounded everyone by repeating the entire list of 25 numbers backwards and forwards. Then he asked people to request numbers by their position in the list, such as the eighth number called, the fourth number and so on. Instantly he repeated back the correct number in the positions called. He did this with the entire list — over and over again without making a single mistake.

Then Peter asked someone to shuffle a deck of cards and call them out in order. Still blindfolded he instantly named the cards in their order backwards and forwards.

You may well imagine our amazement at Peter's remarkable feat. You naturally expect to see a thing of this sort on television or the stage. Even then you look upon it as a trick. But to see it done by an ordinary businessman, in plain view of everyone, blindfolded and under conditions which make trickery impossible, is astonishing to say the least.

* * * * *

On the way home that evening I asked Peter Brown how it was done. He said there was really nothing to it — simply a memory feat, the key to which anyone could easily learn in one evening. The reason most people have bad memories is because they leave memory development to chance. Anyone could do what he had done and develop a good memory, he said, by following a few simple rules. And then he told me exactly how to do it. At the time, I little thought that evening would prove to be one of the most eventful in my life, but that's what it proved to be.

What Peter said I took to heart. In one evening I made remarkable strides towards improving my memory. In just a few days I learned to do exactly what he had done. At first I amused myself with my new-found ability by amazing people at parties. Everyone was talking about my 'memory feat', and I was showered with invitations to all sorts of occasions. People often asked me how they also could become more popular and successful. I used to tell them to learn my 'memory feat' — but this is apart from what I want to tell you now.

The most gratifying thing about the improvement of my memory was the remarkable way it helped me in business. I discovered that my memory training had literally put a razor edge on my mind. My thinking had become clearer, quicker, keener. I was fast acquiring that mental grasp and alertness I had so often admired in men who were spoken of as "brilliant" and "geniuses".

Then I noticed a marked improvement in my writing and conversational powers. Formerly my writing and talk was halting and disconnected. I could never think of things to say until the conversation was over. But now words and ideas leap into my mind. I never have to search for the right word, the right expression or the right thing to say. Instantly I find myself impressing people with bright, sparkling conversation.

It wasn't long before my new-found ability to remember attracted the attention of our Chairman. Since then my salary has increased dramatically.

I found that my ability to remember helped me tremendously in dealing with other people, particularly in meetings. The man who can back up his statements quickly with a string of definite facts and figures dominates every situation. Now it seems as though I never forget anything. I can instantly recall any fact I want to remember as if it were printed in black and white!

* * * * *

These are only a few of the hundreds of ways I have profited by my trained memory. No longer do I suffer the frustration of meeting people I know and not being able to recall their names. The moment I see someone I have met before a name leaps into my mind, together with a string of personal facts. Now I find it easy to recall everything I read. I can now master a subject in considerably less time than before. Price lists, reports, quotations, data of all kinds. I can recall in detail almost at will. I rarely make a mistake.

What's more, I can now do my day's work quicker and with much less effort than before.

What Peter told me that eventful evening was this: "Send for details of Dr. Bruno Furst's Memory Course." I did. That was my first step in learning to do all the remarkable things I have told you about. In fact, I was so impressed that I got permission to publish Dr. Furst's Course myself.

My advice to you now is don't wait another minute. Full details of Dr. Furst's remarkable Course are available free on request. You will be amazed how a powerful memory can improve your opportunities at work and in your social life. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose by posting the coupon today.

BOB HEAP

* * * * *

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Gnome

THE LONG-running dispute over the Gnomess brewing millions has, I am glad to say, been amicably resolved in favour of the senior trustee, i.e myself.

For the record let me say that the following have no claim whatsoever over the £15 billion amassed by my great-aunt, the Marchioness of Ava and Gardner.

● Her daughter Lady Greeda Trimfrittering, formerly the wife of Ezra Pound.

● Her niece Lady Ivana Black-Forest-Gateau-Gnome, half-sister of the Duke of O'Liffey and Donneagh Osmond, whose sad demise due to an LSD overdose in 1975 caused the title to pass to his godson, the Honourable Sidney Vicious of That Ilk.

● Lord Mulligatawny, 4th Baron Soup, cousin of the Earl of Vinda Loo and close personal friend of the Princess of Wales. *(That's enough relations — Ed.)*

In view of the unseemly public feuding amongst my family that has taken place, I have ensured that on my own demise such moneys that will remain will pass to a suitable and uncontroversial legatee.

I refer, of course, to Miss Rita Chevrolet, masseuse to the above, who is as I write faithfully guiding my hand over the signature of my will.

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COLOUR SECTION

Full Princess Di libel story
See page 7

WORLD OF SPIES

MICHAEL FOOT seems disinclined to sue the *Sunday Times* for its preposterous "scoop" about him last weekend, or even the *News of the Screws* for its even more libellous headline (MICHAEL FOOT 'WAS SPY'), on the grounds that he has yet to meet anyone who believed there was any truth in the stories.

Some of his friends, however, are hoping he can be persuaded to change his mind — if only for the pleasure of seeing quite so many rogues and fantasy merchants (Oleg Gordievsky, reporter David Leppard and the *Sunday Times* itself) named on the same writ.

It is certainly hard to see how the newspaper could mount much of a defence. Its source for the Foot story was Oleg Gordievsky — a self-confessed liar whose various claims about British "agents" over the years have been so wildly contradictory as to render his evidence all but worthless. Perhaps aware that it could not go into print on Gordievsky's word alone, the *Sunset Times* despatched David Leppard to Moscow last week in the hope that he could find another ex-KGB officer prepared to corroborate the story.

His first port of call was Mikhail Lyubimov, a KGB man who worked at the Soviet Embassy in London in the 1960s and had met Foot. Alas, he said that he had never made any payments to Michael Foot and had never heard of any suggestion that old Wurzel might be working for Moscow.

Undaunted, Leppard then went to see Viktor Kubeykin, another retired KGB man. And here, according to last Sunday's front-page report, he struck Moscow gold: Kubeykin had seen the file marked "Boot", and confirmed that Soviet intelligence "regarded Foot as an agent of influence".

Alas again! As soon as the *ST* piece was published, a furious Kubeykin flatly denied that he had told Leppard anything of the sort. Collapse of story? Not quite. Leppard continued to insist that his account of the interview with Kubeykin was accurate — and that he had a witness to prove it.

The "witness" is Carey Scott, the paper's new Moscow correspondent, who did indeed accompany him on his visit to Kubeykin. But if Leppard imagines she will save his skin, he may have to think again. According to Kubeykin, when he complained to Scott about the *Sunday Times* story last Sunday, she was equally indignant, agreeing that Leppard had misrepresented him. (Scott herself is unavailable for comment: a message on her Moscow answering machine reveals that she has — very wisely — disappeared to Australia since the article appeared.)

MANY soccer fans were delighted to hear Football Association spokesman Mike Parry denounce the hooliganism of the England supporters in Dublin.

Naturally this was not the same Mike Parry who was detained by the Italian police after a fracas during the world cup in Italy in the summer of 1990.

For that Mike Parry, a loud-mouthed oaf who was then news editor of the *Daily Express*, was involved in an unseemly row in Sardinia over an innocent Italian girl who was caught up in a completely bogus tabloid story ("Isabella the hostess in love romps with England team"). And that Mike Parry behaved so badly that the *carabiniere* felt obliged to confiscate his passport.

Thank goodness the Football Association would never think of employing such a yobbo, and that its Mike Parry is so completely, er, different...

WHEN the Commons public accounts committee (PAC) asked prison director Derek Lewis why Group Four had been given a £21 million private prison contract when there was a lower tender from another shortlisted company, he said he didn't know the answer.

A little later, he explained that Group Four was the most likely firm to keep within its cash limits. When the committee asked Mr Lewis why Group Four had gone over its cash limits by a fantastic £8 million, he blathered on about unpredictable electricity costs.

When the committee then asked why a member of the panel which awarded the contract to Group Four — a Mr Erickson — had, a few months later, left the prison service to join the board of, er, Group Four, Mr Lewis said no rules had been broken.

Perhaps it was Mr Lewis's amazing reluctance to give a straight answer to any of the questions which deterred the committee from asking the most interesting question of all:

Had the letting of this lush contract to the legendarily hopeless Group Four anything to do with the fact that the chairman of the Tory party at the time, Sir Norman Fowler, was on the board of Group Four's holding company?

CABINET UNITED

Street of Shame

JUST FANCY THAT!

"FAN Matthew Simmons got all dressed up to enjoy a night of soccer — but ended up being battered by Eric Cantona's flying boots... Matthew, 20, exclusively told the Sun... the shocked Crystal Palace supporter... Matthew, a Palace fan for 16 years and former junior referee... Matthew, Cantona kick victim..."

— The Sun, 27 January 1995, after buying up Mr Matthew Simmons.

"Convicted thug Simmons, 20, who is said to have triggered the violence with obscene taunts, will also be charged..."

The Sun, 3 February 1995, after realising it was a crap purchase and that loadsa Sun readers really like Cantona.

AT THE *What the Papers Say* press awards, while the hacks' acceptance speeches overflowed with David Mellor legover jokes, the man himself sat there taking the good-natured abuse with equanimity.

His even temper was later explained when he took prizewinner Piers Morgan, *News of the Screws* editor, to one side. He patted Morgan on the back and confided that the *Screws* had done him a huge favour. Its dirty revelations of his extra-marital affair had simply precipitated his divorce from Mrs Mellor.

Morgan's relationships with other MPs targeted by his paper aren't quite so rosy. After he sensationally revealed that Alan Clark, the former defence minister, had bedded both the wife and daughter of Judge Harkess he received a Christmas card from Clark. The seasonal greetings were dispensed with and instead an ominous message was scrawled across the card. It read: "I will get even with you, some day, some way, somehow."

PAUL JOHNSON, *Spectator* and *Daily Mail* writer, has always worshipped hereditary peers and been a slavish fan of Margaret Thatcher. So it was a surprise when Loonybins received a special phone call recently from Labour leader Tony Blair.

Was it to abuse the snobbish Johnson? Er, no. Socialism's great hope was telephoning to ask the rabid rightwinger out to lunch. Self-important to the last, Johnson only commented: "Now I know there is hope for this country."

There are fears, however, that Johnson's indiscriminate ravings may be about to falter. The *Eye* can reveal that Marigold Johnson, Loony's long-suffering wife, has been telling friends she has persuaded him to try the wonder drug Prozac. Some are anxious that the drug, which in a few isolated cases has caused psychotic behaviour, may finally push Johnson over the edge.

CHRIS NAWRAT, removed as *Sunday Times* sports editor last year, is drumming up support for a new venture.

Eye readers may recall that Nawrat was unceremoniously dumped for keeping an advance for a *Sunday Times* sport book when his employers thought he should have used it to pay contributors. Steve Hutchings, his deputy, shared the advance while articles were paid for in green slips for lineage and obituaries, which the paper duly reimbursed. It grew suspicious when it noted the increasing youth of the obituaries' subjects.

Now they are pairing up to launch *Soccer on Sunday* later this year, canvassing for support abroad and in the North.

However, the weighty document they are using to attract the big money is full of comic potential for those in the know. In its description of the new paper's editor it says: "Chris is a proven editor who has balanced multi-million pound budgets for half a decade."

STRANGE goings-on at the *Times*, where ultra-earnest Whitehall correspondent Michael Dynes was removed from his post by editor Peter "Bubbles" Stothard only 12 hours after Stothard had eulogised his correspondent at the launch of Dynes' new book about the machinery of government.

Dynes had to go to make way for Nigel Williamson, the paper's long-haired and increasingly louche news editor, who had been finding the rigours of the news desk too much.

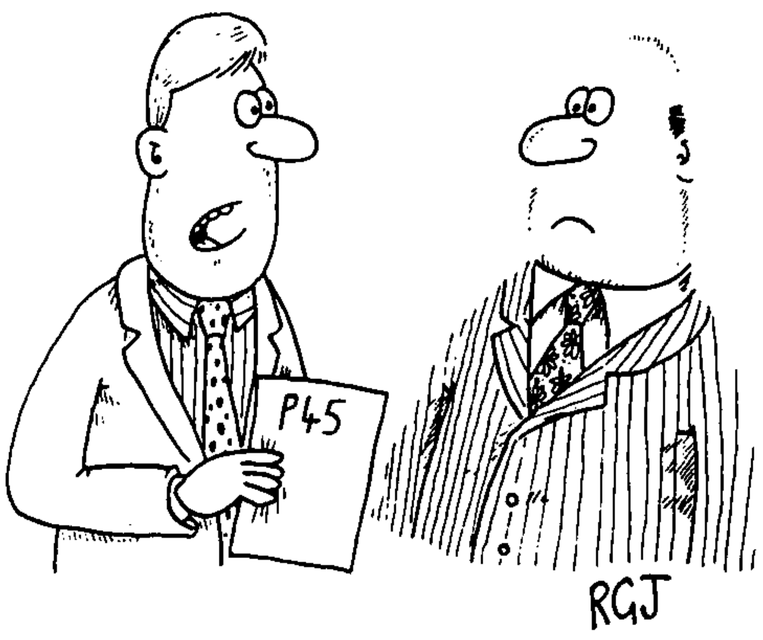
Williamson used to be editor of *Tribune*, but in the past few years has completed a *volte-face* that has ingratiated him with the right-wing ruling clique on the former *Thunderer*. It is anyone's guess what the sober-suited mandarins of Whitehall will make of the hard-drinking, luridly-dressed hack whose natural habitat would seem to be the seedier nightclubs rather than the corridors of power. His first words to the man whose job he had taken were: "I suppose I had better read your book now, Dynes."

Williamson is clearly determined to do his homework properly. In a memo to Stothard, he points out that Whitehall correspondents "do not spring fully-formed". He is therefore demanding to be give "a two-three month 'bedding-in' period" during which he can be relieved of everyday duties while he gets to know senior civil servants "over lunch etc."

The "etc." is presumably a reference to puddings and brandies. As Williamson explains: "I am not going to lunch Sir Humphrey at the Greasy Spoon. Expenses claims are bound to reflect this, particularly in the initial 'bedding-in' period. I assume this is understood and accepted."

Williamson informs his editor that, while covering Whitehall, he also intends to diversify into "some of the other fringe activities which the slog of the news desk have (*sic*) tended to make almost impossible. More book reviewing, possibly a little jazz reviewing, the odd piece for the Saturday magazine (for example, I would be very interested in spending a week this summer with the New Age Travellers, which would make a fascinating piece)."

It is believed these impudent demands have not gone down too well with Stothard: Williamson may be spending some time with the New Age Travellers rather sooner than he intended...



"Sorry, George, but you've lost your edge..."

"WHAT on earth is that man doing on my page?" bawled aging *Incredibly Broke on Sunday* columnist Alan Watkins at editor Ian Jack, after discovering that Harry "Loadsamoney" Enfield has been employed permanently to write a *Sindie* column.

Jack did his best to calm Watkins down by assuring him Enfield was hired simply to attract the "younger" reader. To which the ineffably pompous Watkins responded: "When I was young, we all read Freddie Ayer."

The *Sindie's* circulation is 94.

CLAIMS of regionality at the *Grauniad* ring hollow these days as the paper, which has prided itself on its northern roots and good local coverage, dumps its regional theatre reviews.

The reviews offered one of the only avenues for local touring companies and provincial theatres to gain national coverage. The other nationals only deigned to cover provincial theatres if "star" names were involved or if the play had made such a splash that it was going to come to London.

Private I-I-I!

THIS MONTH'S rundown of the nation's most self-obsessed columnists, based on the number of incidences of the word "I" per column-inch.

		Ego Rating
1	Quentin Crisp (Guardian 3/2)	3.50
2	Michael Frayn (Guardian 25/1)	2.85
3	Sally Tisdale (Sunday Times 12/2)	2.10
4	Ruth Dudley Edwards (IoS 18/2)	1.94
5	Bernard Levin (Times 26/1)	1.86
6	Daisy Waugh (Sunday Times 12/2)	1.78
7	Michael Winner (Sunday Times 29/1)	1.74
8	William Donaldson (Independent 28/1)	1.52
9	Imran Khan (Daily Telegraph 6/2)	1.38
10	Harry Enfield (IoS 19/2)	1.31

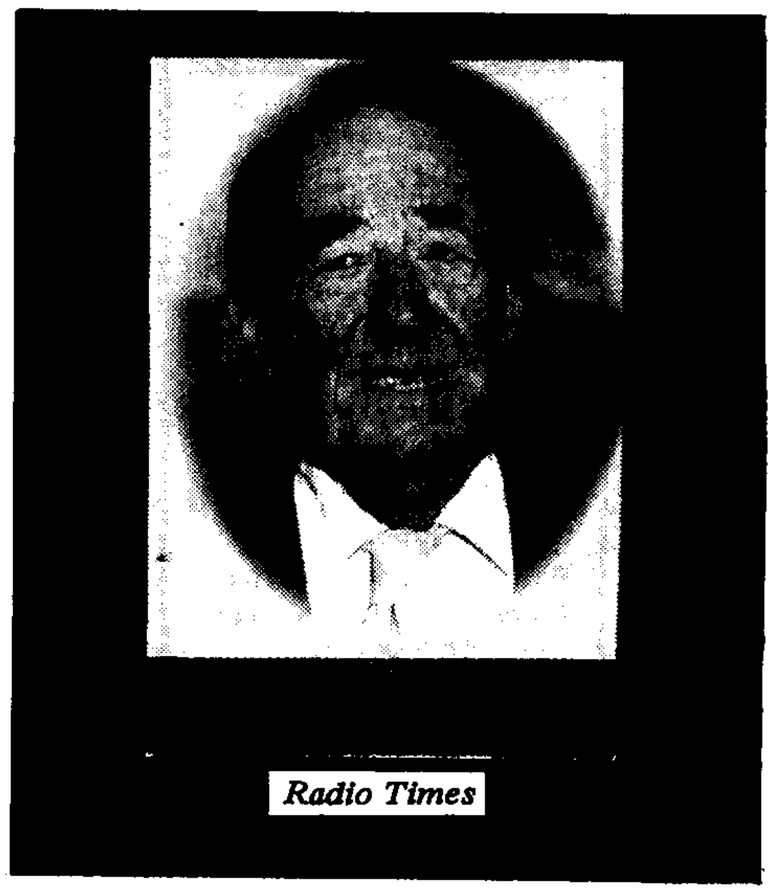
Bubblin' under: Miles Kington, Peter Tory, Jonathan Woss, Justine Picardie.

R-Eye-P

THIS MONTH'S most conspicuous obituarist is Bernard Tomlinson for his piece 'Professor Ian Findlay: an appreciation' (Scotsman 13/2).

References to deceased: 39

References to self: 25



Radio Times

THE *Grauniad* recently carried a front-page news story by one Nick Rosen about Netphone, which "allows voices to be transmitted over the Internet global computer network".

The story omitted one interesting fact: as well as being a freelance journalist, Nick Rosen is also managing director of Intervid, an Internet consultancy company.

ONE person who will be particularly distressed by the demise of *Scallywag* magazine is Tony "gird up your" Loyns, editor of the Fourth Estate's trade paper, *UK Press Gazette*.

While most other observers regarded *Scallywag* as an absurdly dodgy operation which shouldn't be taken seriously, Loyns always treated the shoestring magazine and its drunken editor, Simon Regan, with the utmost respect, dutifully taking all his inflated claims at face value and repeatedly putting him on the front page.

UK Press Gazette continued its relentless plugging of *Scallywag* throughout last autumn, greeting the arrival of each new issue as a major media event. In November it claimed that *Scallywag* was financially solvent and was not currently facing any libel actions. And, at the end of last month, it gave front-page billing to the news that *Scallywag* journalists were also setting up "a new investigative weekly magazine". *Scallywag*'s co-editor, Angus James, revealed that he planned to hire "high-calibre journalists" who would be paid "performance related bonuses" on top of their salaries.

All fantasy, of course. Why then did Tony Loyns and the respected *UK Press Gazette* believe it?

Gym slip Princess

PRINCESS Diana's gym photos "victory" over Mirror Group and the former gym-keeper Bryce Taylor — an unmitigated disaster for HRH and said to be the only case in British legal history in which the defendant who "lost" walked away with more than half a million pounds — is even more fantastic than delirious press reports that announced it.

When photos of the exercising princess were published in November 1993, she consulted royal solicitors Farrers and was furious that they balked at her desire to sue Taylor and the *Mirror*. So she turned to Lord Mishcon, a solicitor with profound experience of newspapers, whose advice was that the case would be a pushover.

For some months it seemed it would be for the usual reason that the wretched Taylor, who had by now fled to Australia, could not afford to defend himself. The turning point came when legal aid, which had twice been refused, was finally granted on appeal and by a judge. The aid covered a QC, who turned out to be the lefty Geoffrey Robertson, scourge of the government in the Matrix Churchill case.

Diana claimed breach of contract and confidence; but her problem was that in keeping with the habits of the modern royal family, she had not paid a penny to use the gym. Where was the "contract" Taylor had broken? The princess insisted a contract had been struck on her behalf with Taylor by her former police protection officer, a man called Graham Smith. But he cannot confirm or deny anything since he is dead.

Refurbished with legal aid, Taylor's lawyers subpoenaed the Metropolitan police and asked to see the regulations governing police protection officers. These rules were instantly and willingly produced without recourse to the public interest immunity certificates Taylor's lawyers were expecting.

It seems there is a growing irritation among the growing ranks of protection officers who are obliged to keep watch on senior politicians, as well as royalty, and who are used all the time as chauffeurs, junior cooks and bottlewashers for the enormously proud and wealthy people they protect. Lo and behold, the disclosed rules specifically prevent protection officers from performing any personal services for their wards; or for making any contracts or agreements on behalf of the people they protect.

To make matters worse, a statement was taken from Di's favourite protection officer, Inspector Ken Wharfe, which differed in several crucial respects with her statement. All this looked quite awful when, two weeks before the case was due to start, Taylor's lawyers won the right to cross-examine Diana.

It became clear in "leading circles" that the case could not be allowed to go ahead. The prospect of the Princess of Wales being cross-examined by the lefty Robertson on her manipulation of the media, on her conversations with Andrew Morton, on her practice of dictating gossip to Nigel Dempster, or on her predilection for taking a freebie whenever one becomes available, was intolerable. There was even dark talk of the princess, if she stuck to her

contract story, running the risk of a perjury charge and of unthinkable headlines like *Her Royal Lieness*.

A shadowy syndicate emerged, similar to the one 65 years ago which agreed to pay the celebrated honours-broker Maundy Gregory a fat salary for the rest of his life if he kept quiet in court about honours he had sold. The 1995 syndicate chairman was Lord Palumbo, a fanatic for the royals; and its solicitors were Theodore Goddard, who acted for King Edward VIII during the abdication crisis. Under "pressure" from this syndicate, an out-of-court agreement was hatched. Bryce Taylor agreed to apologise and destroy his negatives. The *Mirror* agreed to grovel. Di got £25,000 for a charity of her choice and she was allowed publicly to claim victory.

This "settlement" cost the syndicate nearly £1 million: £500,000 for Bryce; £200,000 to allow him to pay the tax on that; and another £250,000 to pay back the costs of his legal aid. The agreement was clinched late at night in Mishcon's office and agreed on the phone with the princess who was in Tokyo.

Who paid the money? Palumbo himself could not have paid it as his own fortune is being contested by his children. No doubt there were plenty of rich sycophants ready to stump up to save the face of royalty — but an intriguing suggestion is that the biggest contributor to the syndicate's cost was the *Mirror* itself, backed by a consortium of other newspapers who, as the case grew nearer, feared a Diana victory in the courts and a sudden new judge-made law of privacy which would stand forever.

Thus while the *Mirror*'s rivals sneered and hooted at the *Mirror*'s disastrous defeat, many were lurking at the back door to help with the settlement. For the papers the outcome was magnificent. As the *News of the World* leader put it: THE ROYAL FAMILY IS SAFE — safe, that is, for more hounding and more gossip. And the papers had a wonderful ready-made front-page story about DI'S SMASHING VICTORY — a story every bit as popular as it was untrue.

WORLD OF HYPE

MAX CLIFFORD, purveyor of fine fuck 'n' fib stories to the tabloids, has resigned his PR job at Caesar's nightclub in Streatham.

Two months after the doors opened, Clifford has walked, advising creditors to see the club's new owners about their money. If a recent burglary is anything to go by they are out of luck: burglars found the safe was empty.

Clifford, the promotions expert, won't be forgotten in saarf London in a hurry. Controversial hypnotist Paul McKenna was recently due to perform at Caesar's, and many punters had paid £25 for the tickets. On the big day they received a letter telling them that the show was cancelled because Lambeth council had refused McKenna and his mindbending show a licence.

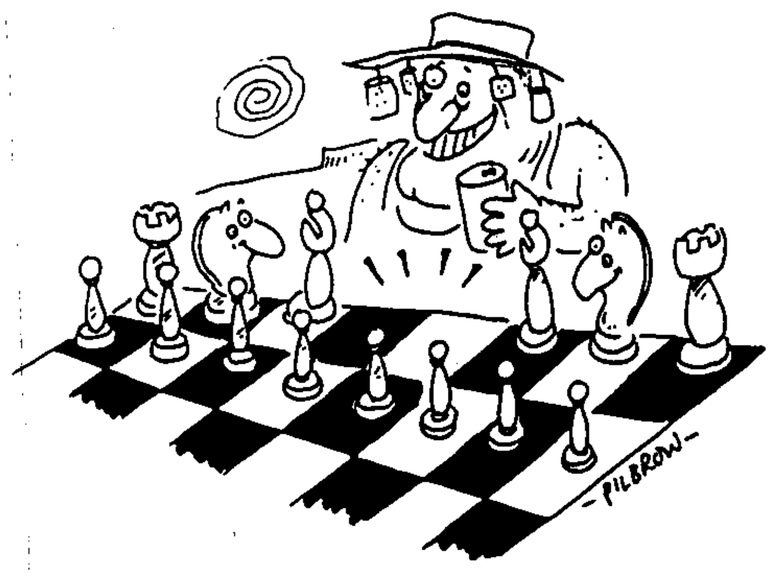
Unluckily the club have realised it had no licence after the Streatham public had handed over their cash. Clifford should stay clear of Streatham until the irate ticketholders get their money back.

MOHAMED FAYED is a "lovely" man, according to Michael Cole, the former respected lobby correspondent and now a PR sycophant for the owner of Harrods.

Thus it was that when Labour MP Max Madden put down a parliamentary question last week asking the home secretary if Fayed had been granted British citizenship, Cole was soon on the phone to Madden singing Fayed's praises and inviting Madden to tea with the Egyptian.

Perhaps miffed that the invitation hardly compared with a week's stay at the Ritz in Paris which is offered to Tory MPs, Madden politely declined. Subsequently home ministers told Madden it would be wrong to discuss Fayed's affairs in public.

Could these be the same home office ministers who cheered prime minister John Major when, behind the protection of parliamentary privilege, he falsely accused Fayed of trying to blackmail him?



ROYAL HUMBUG

THE *SUN* was quick to condemn the "rat" and "sneak" who tried to sell it radiopager messages between Princess Diana and a mystery man.

What the rag failed to reveal was that the student sneak, one Chris Hadley, *was first approached by one of the* Sun's *representatives*. It also forgot to say that he was a freelance journalist as well as a student — presumably not wanting to put off its other freelance contributors.

In his first venture into tabloid hackery Hadley negotiated with the *Sunday Mirror* an offer of £35,000 for his story. But the paper later withdrew when the Mirror Group's gym photos case with Diana made it undiplomatic to carry on.

The indebted student journalist was then approached by the *Sun*, which said it would match the offer. A charmingly reptilian reporter, Mike Sullivan, took Hadley out for drinks and got the whole story out of him. Days later a horrified Hadley read the article — which managed to include most of the details of his story while calling him a rat and paying him nothing!

A week later, the *Sun* ran the story again — this time including the messages and naming the sender as Oliver Hoare — but without, of course, accusing itself of being rat-like. Perish the thought.

PRIVACY CORNER

ANDREW NEILL, now reduced to presenting the pisspoor *Is This Your Life?* on Channel 4, has complained bitterly to staff at Open Media, the show's production company, about a "pathetic" magazine called *Private Eye*.

Apparently this offensive rag keeps publishing "gratuitously" a photograph of Mr Neill pictured with a young admirer. "They just won't respect privacy," whinges Neill, who has himself, of course, an admirable track record of respecting the privacy of the great and the good.

Is this your wife?

IN THE TEAROOM

ONE thing about a single European currency that all Tories, inside and outside the cabinet, agree on, is that Britain will not have to decide the question until 1999 at the earliest. So why are Jonathan Aitken, Michael Portillo and Kenneth Clarke squabbling publicly about it now?

While one tearoom Machiavelli detects manoeuvrings by Aitken, Portillo and Clarke to mark out their ground for a forthcoming leadership struggle — and to make Major look feeble in the process — another argues that the whole episode of spats, counter-spats and cabinet gagging has worked so well for the prime minister he must have planned it all along.

According to this theory, Major has pulled off three coups in the last fortnight: he has divided critics on the right by allowing Aitken to emerge as a rival to Portillo; he has deflected the venom of the Eurosceptics away from himself and on to the chancellor; and he has given the parliamentary party a taste of how unpleasant an autumn leadership contest would be.

The only common thread, of course, is that no one in the tearoom is naive enough to suggest that the row has anything whatever to do with the merits or otherwise of a single currency.

'Urquhart'

PERHAPS the most unlikely of the many famous people trying to stop Lord Justice Scott's biting criticism are Gordon Brown, shadow chancellor of the exchequer, and his Labour frontbench colleague Joyce Quin.

Brown and Quin are sharply attacked by Scott for their cavalier approach to the import and export act of 1990, whose second reading was rushed through the Commons in 20 minutes flat.

The act became necessary when someone noticed that the entire law governing imports and exports was contained in emergency powers legislation rushed through before the second world war in 1939. This effectively gave the government powers to do what it liked about controlling imports or exports without bothering with parliamentary debate.

It wasn't until the row over the manufacture in Britain of the Iraqi supergun and the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in August 1990 that anyone decided to do anything to update the law. In November 1990, the government, in the shape of Tim Sainsbury MP, brought forward a little bill to make the 1939 emergency powers permanent. Instead of demanding a more democratic system for controlling exports and imports, the Labour opposition meekly agreed. Joyce Quin explained that the bill was "a technical measure".

Lord Justice Scott violently disagrees with government and the opposition.

Gordon Brown is said to be "apoplectic" with fury about the criticisms, and, along with innumerable other ministers and civil servants attacked in the report, is doing his best, via his lawyers, to get the criticism softened or set aside.

TEN DAYS ago the grand committee room of the Commons resounded to the cheers of Iraqi thugs and Jordanian businessmen anxious to sell arms to Saddam Hussein.

They were delighted with calls made by two bishops, plus Sir David Steel, Tam Dalyell, Lord Healey and Labour's frontbench spokesperson on overseas development in the House of Lords, Lord Rea, that sanctions against Iraq should be lifted.

The cheering only subsided when Tory MP Emma Nicholson asked how Lord Rea could support the lifting of sanctions when Labour's official policy was to retain them. An embarrassed Rea offered there and then to resign his position.

His embarrassment was made worse when Labour's frontbench spokesperson on foreign affairs, Ann Clwyd, argued — to boos from the audience and jeers from Saddam's chum George Galloway — that the only way to get Saddam to respect human rights was to keep sanctions on until he was forced out of office.

LIBERAL Democrat MP Nigel Jones has gallantly come to the defence of accident-prone computer giant ICL.

The company built a system for Gloucestershire county council to monitor its social services budget. The system didn't work, and after abandoning it the council is now £1 million worse off.

To help clean up the mess, the council extracted £120,000 via a "supplementary credit approval" from the same social services budget. This has meant freezing home helps and other "non-vital" provisions. A leaked internal report now reveals that the council has budgeted for consultants to build a replacement system at £1,000 per day.

Jones has lambasted reports of the problems in *Computer Weekly* newspaper as "wholly fictitious", although he admitted he hadn't seen the report mentioned.

FACT: Jones is a former employee of ICL who still receives £5,000 per year as a parliamentary adviser to the company. He omitted to mention this before or during his intervention. Why? Because "everyone knows" this already, he says, so it wasn't necessary to mention it.

CURSE OF GNOME

NO sooner had Backbiter described the fiasco of the Student Loans Company's computer systems (*Eye* 864) than the contractor responsible, EDS, was sacked.

The education department got rid of the computer company after the SLC's former chairman Malcolm Hurlston accepted freebies, and staff found they could process claims quicker by hand than by using the computers.

The other deal EDS snapped up — at the Inland Revenue — is currently under review by the national audit office.

WE were wrong when we said (*Eye* 865) that Michael Heseltine would refer Trafalgar House's application to take over Northern Electric to the monopolies commission. But by refusing to do so, he has shocked even his mentor in privatisation, the electricity regulator Professor Stephen Littlechild.

Littlechild, as we disclosed, wanted to refer the bid. Heseltine's action is not, of course, in any way related to the massive contributions (£600,000 since 1979) made by Trafalgar House to the Tory party.

Littlechild largely invented the formula that was supposed to create thousands of small shareholders with a stake in their own electricity utility. Instead, the 1.4 million householders in the north of England who depend on Northern Electric as a monopoly-supplier are likely to find themselves buying electricity from an international conglomerate. But Hezza thinks that no concern of the monopolies commission.

While Littlechild may now refer the bid himself, Trafalgar House is trying to persuade him that the vague assurances it has given (which are not legally binding) will be sufficient. Littlechild wants licence amendments which *would* be legally enforceable. Without them, the role of regulator will be largely cosmetic and he can go back to university.

Even with such amendments, however, his power to control prices will depend on Trafalgar House remaining under the jurisdiction of the British courts. It is 26 percent owned by a firm in Hong Kong — which is to be handed over to China in two years. Perhaps Northern's customers should start to learn how to pay their bills in international drafts, calculated in yuans.

ALL is not well at one of the government's more expensive privatisations: Shorts, the Belfast-based arms to aircraft manufacturer.

Best known for its heat-seeking missile systems, Shorts was sold in 1989 — but only after the then chief secretary to the treasury, John Major, had threatened to resign. He and the then Northern Ireland secretary Tom King wanted to provide an openended incentive package for prospective purchasers: the government would inject vast sums of public money before and even after the sell-off. Thatcher demurred but eventually gave in after Major threw a wobbly.

Since privatisation, and despite employing David "Blowpipe" Mellor and Mark Thatcher's best man Steve Tipping as consultants, Shorts has been beset by poor sales and industrial relations problems.

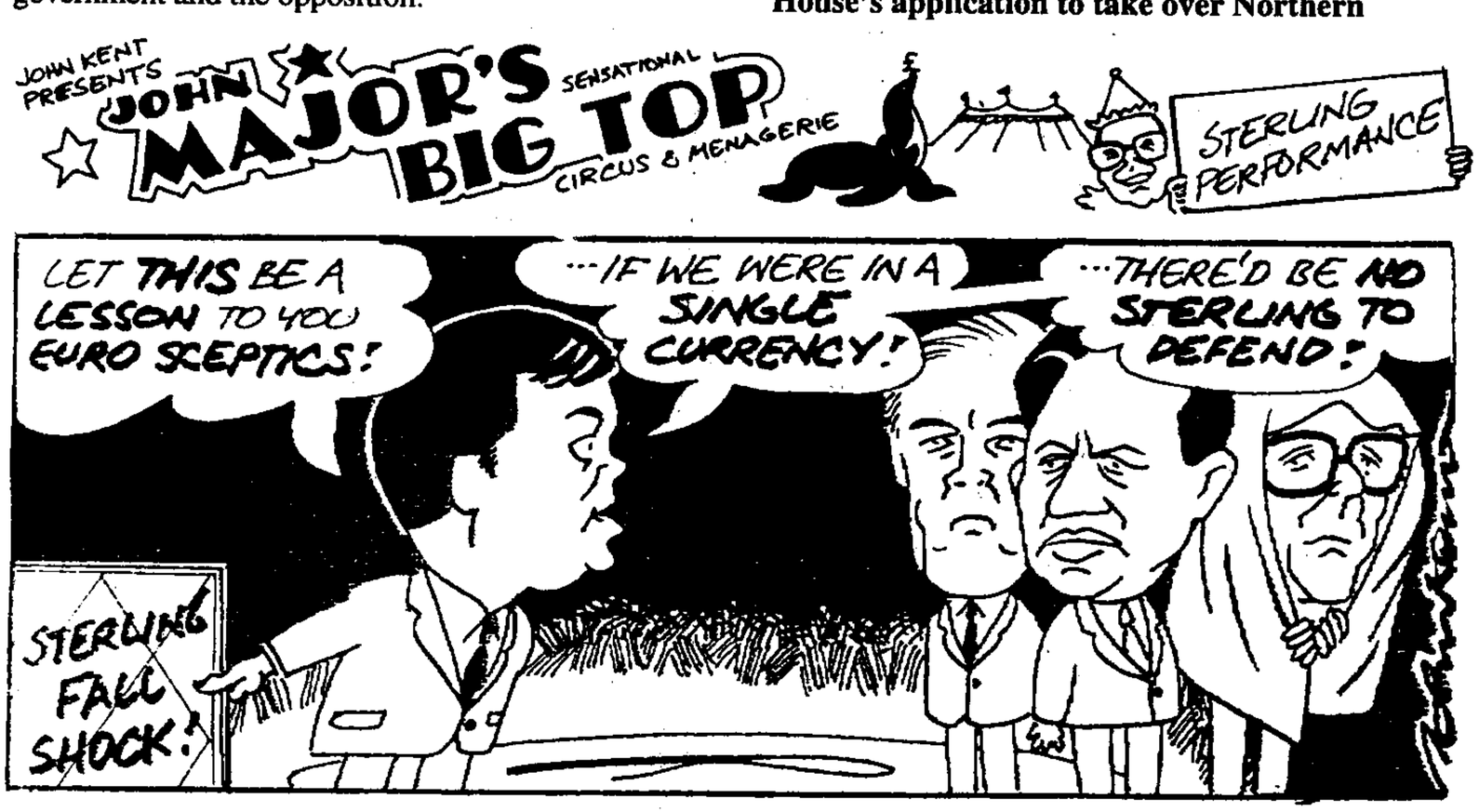
Documents leaked to a local paper suggest that the workforce will be offered a massive zero percent pay rise this year, 1.5 percent next and a generous 2 percent in 1997. Greedy union officials, unwilling or unable to adapt to the enterprise culture, contrast this with the modest pay of Shorts boss Roy McNulty. Last year his salary rose to a miserly £394,000 a year — just double the pre-privatisation figure, but a sum that only goes part of the way to compensating him for the stress of having to impose constant redundancies.

'Backbiter'

LET'S PARLER PRESCOTT!

"I mean that's an example of this government that believes in the private sector and is in fact damaged the public sector's handling within the public sector in a number of these areas and you can go on with them in another areas. So I think the basic point that is necessary in order to have private capital in our industries to get the extra resources that we do want, that you have to be privatised is not borne out by the facts in other countries and neither should we have it here also and if he's any doubts about that go and have a look at the reports that talk it."

— John Prescott, one half of Labour's dream ticket, addressing the Commons on transport policy. Hansard, May 1992.


JOHN KENT PRESENTS
JOHN MAJOR'S SENSATIONAL BIG TOP
CIRCUS & MENAGERIE
STERLING PERFORMANCE
LET THIS BE A LESSON TO YOU EURO SCEPTICS!
...IF WE WERE IN A SINGLE CURRENCY!
...THERE'D BE NO STERLING TO DEFEND!
STERLING FALL SHOCK!

HALLO!

THE HEARTWARMING COLUMN

HALLO! KEN STRONACH, Prince Charles's valet for many years, has received rich reward for his disloyalty in revealing how our future king keeps a teddy bear in his bed and pleasured Camilla Parker-Bowles *al fresco* while still wearing the royal jim-jams.

For spilling this ignominious title-tattle to the *News of the World*, Stronach was promptly sacked from his £12,500 royal job. The traitor was lucky not to have been executed — but the saintly Rupert Murdoch has condemned Stronach to the next best fate. The sacked valet had been counting on a whopping £100,000 plus pay-out from the Sunday rag to keep him in his friendless old-age. But the stern moralists in Murdoch's employ have decided to punish Charles's ex-valet for talking to them — by not paying a single penny!

HALLO! EVEN descendants of marquesas can stoop so low as to row over money in public, it seems. Hence the Marquesa has spent the last week in the high court in solidarity with her old friend Maureen, dowager marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, whose offspring have been haggling over her decision to leave £15 million directly to two grandchildren.

The size of the bequest will certainly have surprised Nigel Dempster and readers of his pisspoor diary in the *Daily Mail*: the Greatest Ligging Englishman has always been clear about the marchioness's financial plight.

In 1989, he told us, she was living on "income of just £1,700 a year". Later, readers learnt, she was "confined to her third-floor bedroom because she could not afford the installation of a lift". The nation was finally moved to tears when in 1990 Dumpster told us that the marchioness had "resorted to selling her old clothes at auction".

The impecunious fourth marchioness of Dufferin who so touched Dumpster's heart was clearly entirely unrelated to the fourth marchioness who had £15 million to give away!

HALLO! *TONY BLAIR's "new" Labour party is still full of sourpuss socialists — witness the reception in Stevenage for brilliant potential parliamentary candidate Barbara Follett, elegant, power-dressing wife of millionaire thriller writer Ken.*

Four-times married Mrs Follett, who lists Tony Blair and a £2 million house in Chelsea among her friends, topped the poll at a shortlisting meeting only to have it declared null and void because of "irregularities".

In her CV Barbie promised munificently: "As Labour representative in Stevenage, I will have a full-time staffed office in the town." But a humourless "cloth cap" type is now threatening an official compliant based on the party's code of conduct. "No financial inducement to the constituency party," it states, "may be offered in an attempt to secure support."

Tony must waste no time in stamping out the politics of envy.

HALLO! *DEAR old Worzel Gummidge, aka Michael Foot — or 0081½ as he is known at SMERSH headquarters — was characteristically generous while reviewing a biography of Tony Blair in the Grauniad.*

He marvelled that Blair had not joined the SDP when other right-wingers were peeling off in the early 1980s: this proved what a good socialist Blair was.

But hang on a minute. Young Tony was a member of the chambers of Lord Irvine, the lifelong Labour supporter and now shadow lord chancellor, and Irvine would not have been too amused if one of his juniors had deserted the party. Of course if Blair had become an SDP turncoat, the fledgeling MP and barrister might not have landed such juicy briefs...

HALLO! **VISCOUNT Camrose, the former deputy chairman of the *Torygraph* and one-time Tory MP who died recently, received a solemn obituary in the *Daily Telegraph*.**

It praised him for his journalistic flair; his conduct as an officer in the second world war; and his golf. But it also pointed out that he was one of those men "esteemed by their friends to be less eminent than they might have been".

The original draft of this levelheaded obit was less kind: it had lingered on the fact that the viscount was best known for his "social" pursuits, and that the job of running the press empire had fallen to his industrious, bright younger brother Lord Hartwell.

The *Torygraph* deemed this far too rude about the man who had once led the paper, and the draft was duly spiked — much to the chagrin of its author, one Lord Hartwell.

HALLO! POOR Lord Tebbit. He has been telling us the European Union has made him sympathize with Nelson Mandela! And that: "I begin to understand how it must have felt to be a South African black."

How Norman used to lecture us all on the need to trade with South Africa during the heroic years of apartheid! And how well the Marquesa recalls sitting, spellbound, in April 1988 when Norman ranted at a South African Club dinner about the "stinking hypocrisy" of South Africa's critics!

He declared that whites had as much right to live in South Africa as blacks — many of whom, he explained, had only arrived there recently.

To demonstrate his complete impartiality Norman then declared his full support for Zola Budd becoming a British citizen overnight.

HALLO! TO Mayfair's Church of the Immaculate Conception, where "family values" press baron Lord Rothermere is having his grandson Vere christened.

The photographs in his lordship's *Daily Mail* are suitably newsworthy and adorable — but what a shame Rothermere, 68, didn't include the exquisite second Lady Rothermere, dainty Japanese former "hand masseuse", Maiko Lee, 44, in the happy line-up.

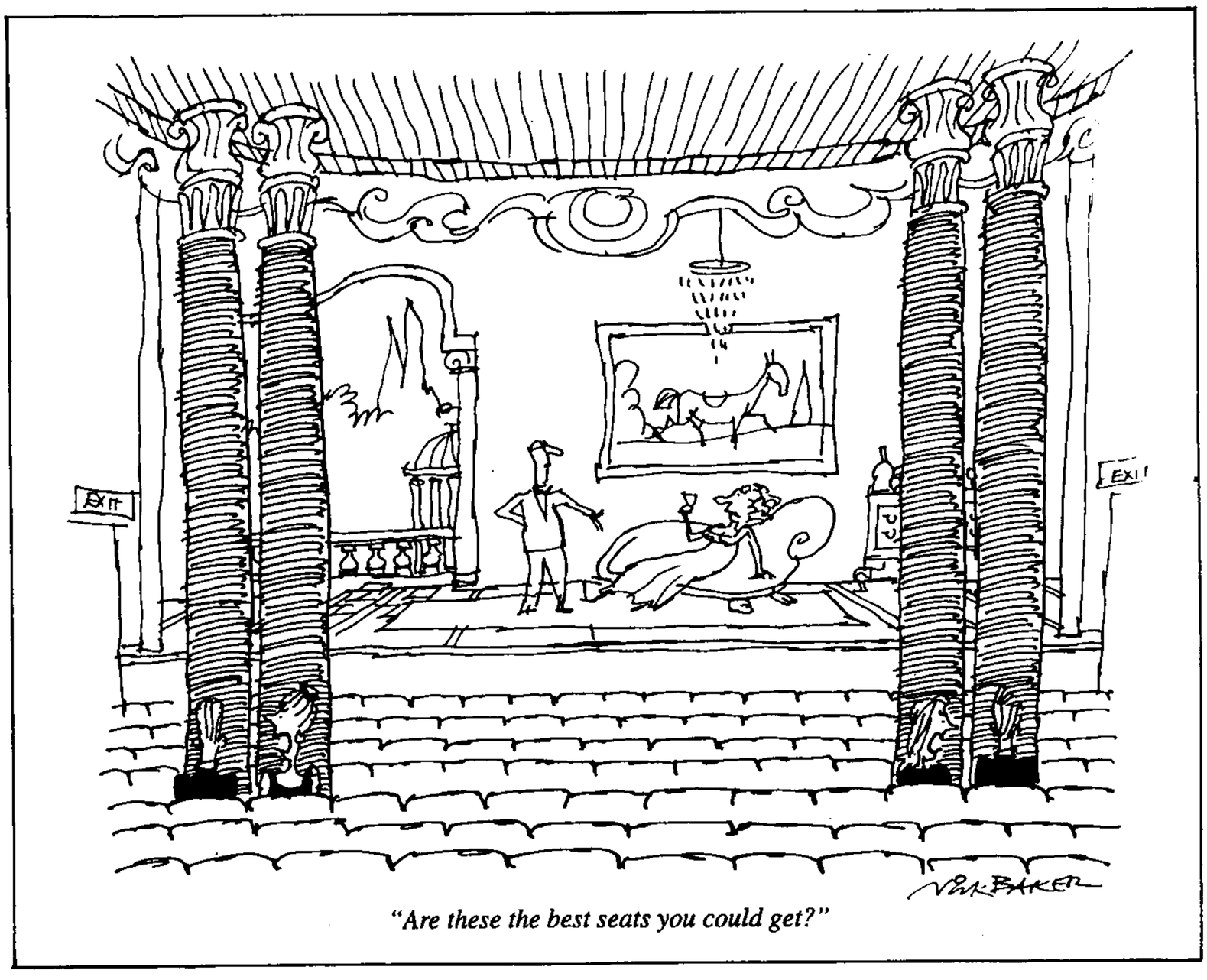
Maiko, whom the late, lustrous Bubbles used to call "that geisha", would have added enough glamour to compensate for Rothermere's son and heir, the preposterously bovine Hon Jonathan Harmsworth. But it was commendably compassionate of the *Mail*, when alluding to Jonathan's "proud" parents-in-law, not to mention their serious financial difficulties. Secondhand Cockney car dealer Terry Clemence has been forced into an "individual voluntary arrangement" by irate creditors, although it hasn't stopped him living in a Belgravia mansion.

HALLO! *OH DEAR: Nigel Short, chess-playing genius, has few friends left up north, it seems, since he spurned Manchester's chess world championship and slid off to London where, courtesy of the Times, he lost spectacularly to Gary Kasparov.*

Back in his native north-west he agreed to take part in a simultaneous exhibition match against 25 eager amateurs at Bolton's college of further education. There was plenty of pre-match publicity, and the chess players were told to book early.

When the day arrived the public was turned away and the show had to be cancelled. Why? Organisers could only find eight people who wanted to play the popular British champion.

The Marquesa



"Are these the best seats you could get?"

TV

People and Programmes (BBC Publications)

Radio Times (BBC Publications)

IT IS only four years since BBC News & Current Affairs, in its report on the battle to succeed Margaret Thatcher, kept making the interesting point that a stage in Britain's social evolution had been reached when a candidate for the Tory leadership — Douglas Hurd — had to keep apologising for being upper-class.

Even so it must be a shock for the news and current affairs boys, and the BBC's other employees, to discover that, barely 50 months later, being *middle*-class has become socially unacceptable in Britain as well. For this is the unmistakeable message of **People and Programmes**, the 173-page report published last week by the BBC after a two-year examination of its output. Programming is apparently to be more regional, more approachable, less elitist, with more programmes aimed specifically at minority groups.

This survey is the most extensive, and expensive, exercise in liberal guilt ever mounted. The BBC was established as a general broadcaster, a reflection of the principle that high-quality and intelligent programming should be on offer to all potential viewers. Radical thinkers in British broadcasting point out that the free market system in American television has not prevented inventive and dangerous programmes such as *The Larry Sanders Show*. But these are the products of middle-class ghetto cable channels, or the state-funded minority PBS channel, whose federal backing is one of the first targets of Newt Gingrich and the cost-cutters of the new congress.

The point of the BBC is that such material should be widely available. It is highly unlikely that seven million viewers would have subscribed to a channel showing such programmes as *Middlemarch*, but seven million switched on BBC2 to watch it. The real nightmare of *People and Programmes* is that it suggests the BBC is becoming a subscription channel by default, through the medium of obsessive market research, half a million pounds worth of which forms the backbone to the document.

Yet television successes are unpredictable. Would market research have established that 10 million people might watch a sitcom about a dipsomaniac PR woman? Surely market research would have found resistance to a show about valuing trinkets as middle-class and elitist, and yet *Antiques Roadshow* is watched by 13.5 million a week.

Finally, the idea that, say, black people are not fit to watch *Newsnight* or *Antiques Roadshow* and need specialist programmes of their own, is itself insidiously racist. There is a big difference between avoiding racially-offensive shows — which is the proper moral responsibility of the BBC — and becoming obsessed with racially-targeted ones.

But the most convincing case against the document comes from the discipline from which the programme review exercise itself claimed to spring: demographics. In the area in which this science of social analysis is most used — politics — all the surveys indicate the increasing power and reach of the middle classes rather than their marginalisation.

The middle-classing of Britain is generally regarded as one of the most significant post-80s trends. The percentage of the population regarding itself as middle-class increases in every poll. The BBC might like to consider why, when they are so reluctant to be seen in the company of the middle-classes, Tony Blair is simultaneously shaping a traditionally socialist political party towards them. This is particularly ironic as Birt's policy review was actually modelled on those conducted by the Labour party since the Kinnock years.

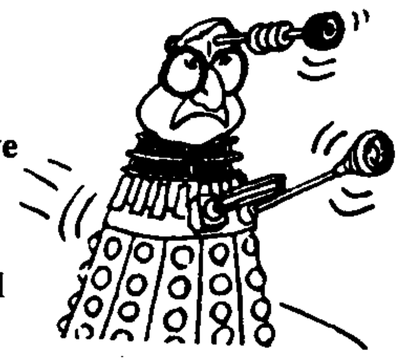
Meanwhile the current issue of **Radio Times** reveals the extent to which the curse of market research continues to grip the corporation. Botney has brought back the pisspoor *Harry* for a second series, despite its poor ratings performance first time round. *Radio Times* announces this news in a preview containing the following hilarious paragraph: "Viewers who didn't particularly warm to Harry first time round may find him more likeable in this series; life has softened hard-nosed Harry, and he has learned to charm rather than cajole..."

Behind these words, you can simply smell the focus group that objected, on viewing an episode of *Harry* series one, that the central character lacked likeability and charm. Hence — and bugger consistent characterisation — he has been given them for the new series. However, clearly the focus group also included viewers who thought *Harry* was quite good as it was, in particular its violent action, and so the *Radio Times* puff goes on to reassure: "But the story still comes first, and tonight he's chasing some particularly brutal vigilantes."

God help the BBC, caught between the devil and the ABCs.

'Square Eyes'

BIRTSPEAK



BBC programme-makers — or "output directorates", as they are now known — have received the following important memo:

"As part of the Ten Year Strategy project, all output directorates are working with Corporate Affairs on the development of a more coherent approach to the BBC brand. This is the first step in both improving the effectiveness of marketing and exploring the possible development of new BBC services. Jane Frost, Head of Corporate Relations Regional Broadcasting, and Una Hayes from Red Spider Consultants will be visiting all Regions and National Regions for internal focus group meetings to discuss the 'Branding Project'."

Even the outside consultant from Red Spider seems to have been afflicted by the Birtspeak bug. In an accompanying note, Una Hayes asks department heads to "please request that each individual bring along examples of WHAT THE BBC IS and WHAT THE BBC IS NOT. An example might be that on TV, BBC2 ident is BBC and that the National Lottery is **not** BBC. The purpose will be to create two shopping baskets demonstrating what is seen to be BBC and what is not seen to be the BBC."

Got that?

MEDIA NEWS

TORY MP Michael Fabricant missed his chance of TV fame when the publicity-hungry backbencher's role in the drama series *The Final Cut*, was ruthlessly cut.

In the last *Eye* it was reported how the MP had shocked John Major by reciting his rather disloyal lines to him in the Commons tearoom.

Fabricant lost his one-line part when Michael Dobbs, the author of the Westminster thriller, got cold feet about the series. He has been in negotiations with BBC drama chiefs to remove veiled political references from the series ever since he was appointed deputy chairman of the Tory party.

WHILE the BBC announces plans to make its programmes more interesting to poor people who are young and live a long way from London, radio stations in the BBC North area are reeling from new redundancies.

These are not dressed up as Birtian efficiencies, but are simple cuts: new tighter budgets meant staff had to go, and North's radio stations are each laying off two of their three engineers.

The engineers control all aspects of transmission and make sure there is something to listen to. Any transmission problems will be much harder to cure with only one engineer.

Strangely, the £2 million report on "whither the BBC?" has not been received enthusiastically by regional radio stations up north.

THE FUCCANEERS
THREE OUTSIDERS - BIRTY, PHILLIS & LIZ...
INVADE BRITISH ESTABLISHMENT
HUNTING A FORTUNE
AND SOCIETY IS APPALLED
WOOD LANE
WHEN THEY TAKE OVER DAFTOLD DUKE'S STATELY HOME!
"Rape! Homosexuality! but no nasty questions!"
People and Programmes
Ken Pyne

I-BSkyB

44 Satellite TV station (3)
Sun Crossword

CONTRIBUTOR: Toby White

An occasional column for which readers are invited to submit Sky-plugs masquerading as news items in Murdoch papers. The usual £10 will be paid.

LAW 'n' order enthusiast Richard Littlejohn, who presents a daily TV show on Sky and writes a column for the *Daily Mail*, has long campaigned for tougher measures against criminals. Perhaps it is time he turned his attention to the antics of his own researcher at Sky, Mark McKenna.

At Luton magistrates' court last month McKenna was convicted of stealing a woman's bank-card and using it to obtain a total of £1,200 from a cash dispenser at Barclays bank. He was ordered to pay £1,200 compensation to the woman, plus a £400 fine and £40 costs. McKenna told police that he was motivated by "greed".

McKenna, previously with the South Beds News Agency in Luton, has also worked for the *Sun* and *Today*. He has been trying desperately — and, so far, successfully — to hide the court case from his employers at Sky — and particularly from that stern disciplinarian, Richard Littlejohn.

LINDA Lee-Potter has for months now been using her weekly *Mail* column to attack a defenceless woman TV presenter, *GMTV*'s Anthea Turner.

Turner is twittish, dim and clearly not up to it, if we are to believe Potter's rantings; and her latest assault complained that "Anthea Turner is still giggling away in her top slot".

If poor Anthea were to be sacked, of course, there would be a vacancy on the breakfast channel. Ever keen to assist, the *Eye* suggests the gap could be filled by stunning Radio 4 presenter, Charlie Lee Potter!

Charlie, by chance, is Glenda Lee-Potter's daughter and twice last year she failed auditions to join *GMTV*. Naturally the connection would not have crossed mum's mind!

PERSONAL FINANCE

PREPARE to be told to invest in South Africa — in particular in Old Mutual South African unit trusts — by the fearless gaggle of family finance hacks led by Ian Cowie in the *Daily Telegraph* and Jeff Prestridge at the *Mail on Sunday*.

None of the hacks is an expert, but that won't stop them filing masses of copy as they justify a week away from the office on a luxury freebie to the republic courtesy of Old Mutual — aka Providence Capitol, a Basingstoke unit trust management group which successfully concealed its South African parentage during the apartheid years.

But if past performance is any guide, as they say in the exciting world of unit trusts, South Africa had better prepare for economic collapse. The last big all-expenses paid trip enjoyed by the money hacks was just before Christmas when they flew to Caracas in Venezuela and Buenos Aires in Argentina for nearly a fortnight, courtesy of Irish money group Singer & Friedlander, which flogs funds that invest in the region.

Led by *grande dame* Margaret Stone of the *Daily Mail*, the *Telegraph*'s Cowie (again) and the *Sunday Times*'s Paul Nuki (who was involved in a Caracas club incident with mother of two Ceri Jones from the *Investor's Chronicle*), the hacks wrote great slabs of copy which may well have convinced gullible readers to buy Latin American shares. Within days of their return the Mexican economy had crashed and no fewer than 12 Venezuelan insurance companies and four Caracas banks had collapsed.

HACKWATCH

VANESSA FELTZ

VANESSA FELTZ is big, blonde and busty, as she never tires of telling us. Although her television chatshow is being touted as Britain's answer to Oprah Winfrey, the ratings figures hardly seem to bear this out.

Still, never mind: it is now received wisdom in Fleet Street that any telly presenter is fully qualified to write a newspaper column. And so, every week, Vanessa has her own page in the *Daily Mirror*.

But does this Eve Bollard lookalike have much to say? Not really. She is, after all, a busy woman: wife, mother and minor celeb. She can't be expected to know anything about the wider world beyond the television studio and the kitchen table. And so, making a virtue of necessity, she writes about herself — incessantly...

7 September 1994: Jan Fitzalan-Howard has been sewing nametapes on school uniforms for the sons of her friend Lord Caithness. This gives Vanessa the opportunity for a confession of her own: "I've spent all week pricking my fingers and swearing as I sewed the fiddly little blighters into my two girls' kits." Vanessa also finds space to grumble about the fact that Sue Cook will be paid £4,000 for presenting the BBC's Children in Need telethon: "I'll be on BBC radio all night, doing exactly the same thing for free." What's the use of doing charitable work if you can't boast about it?

14 September: "It has happened again and every one of us is heartsick." The "it" in question is the murder of building society manager Carol Wardell. As ever, la Feltz has a personal angle. "Next Monday's *Vanessa* show is all about the violence infecting our society," she reports. "My daughters are five and eight and I'd no more let them walk down to the local sweet shop on their own than I'd let them loose on the track at Brand's Hatch."

21 September: Are fat people sexy? Vanessa thinks they are — herself included. "I'm big, I'm blonde and I'm not going to nibble celery sticks for anybody." To prove her point, she mentions that she recently "guested" on *GMTV* with Robbie Coltrane, whom she found to be "irresistible".

28 September: "I'm used to the F-word. Fat. After all, I've been called it in practically every newspaper in the country." But does she care? Not at all. "We mountainous maidens know we're being passionately wedded, ardently bedded and universally lusted after."

5 October: Time for a further bulletin on the Feltz offspring. "This week McDonald's celebrates 20 years in Britain and, despite what snooty foodies might say, I'm convinced my kids would have perished without them." Lest we had forgotten, she reminds us that "my girls are five and eight".

12 October: "I take my suspender belt off to anyone who can manage sex on a desk, as reportedly witnessed at the TSB. I tried it once — way back in my wanton youth of course — and desk-top canoodlings are just too darned uncomfortable. Staples in your important little places. Word processor jabbing at his honeymoon tackle. Need I say more?" Please, no! But she does anyway: the fact that the TSB couple were caught by an office cleaner reminds Vanessa that she has always fancied hiring a char-lady to scrub her kitchen floor. Alas, "I've never had the cash to afford it".

26 October: Exciting news: "On Saturday I appeared on Ireland's legendary *Kenny Live* show, alongside Ian Botham and Major Ronald Ferguson."

9 November: Zoe Wanamaker and her new husband haven't bothered to take a honeymoon. "Very sensible," Vanessa opines. "I ended up on a hospital drip on mine after Michael and I fed each other dollops of smoked salmonella."

23 November: Vanessa is outraged that British Gas boss Cedric Brown earns a "monstrous salary" while ordinary folk such as herself can scarcely afford to heat their houses. "Nearly ten years ago I married a junior hospital doctor on an annual salary of £6,000, naively hoping our love would keep us warm. Of course, it didn't. Sex is wonderful, but gas was a necessity. I remember how much we agonised about turning on the heating, piling on the jumpers to save pennies..." She then turns to another problem in the Feltz household — the lack of a "responsibly produced, non-sordid" sex handbook for children. She urges publishers to "hurry up" and produce one. "My girls are five and eight," she reminds us yet again, "and growing more curious every week."

7 December: Fiona Fullerton's wedding provides an excuse for yet another self-pitying reminiscence. "The last time I interviewed Fiona Fullerton she was utterly beautiful," Vanessa recalls. "I, on the other hand, had given birth to my younger daughter only three days before and was baggy-eyed, flabby-middled, strapped for cash and distinctly soggy in the brassiere region."

14 December: The grumblings from doom-mongers about National Lottery winners do not impress Vanessa. "My Grandma Babs, God rest her soul, would have said: 'They're just jealous.' And she'd have been right." Meanwhile, the revelation that actress Linda Robson is married to a window cleaner is the cue for another member of the Feltz clan to take a bow: "My dad was in the ladies' underwear business," Vanessa confides.

4 January: Is there no limit to the columnist's supply of relations? Apparently not. "I have three strapping brothers-in-law and, to put it mildly, we've had our ups, downs and the screaming abdabs in the 10 years since I married into the family." Even so, she loves them really. "You see, my bros-in-law are gentlemen."

11 January: "I'm still in shock," Vanessa announces. "Yesterday my two blonde, blue-eyed daughters, Allegra and Saskia, were on *The Big Breakfast* 'Telly Rellie' game where viewers are invited to guess who their TV personality mum was." Well done!

18 January: A transvestite has been in the news. This gives la Feltz a chance to plug her TV programme again. "We've had plenty of transvestites on the *Vanessa* show," she points out.

25 January: Hot gossip from the ever-fascinating world of daytime TV. "Yesterday we were filming next Tuesday's *Vanessa* show, about Abba-mania. Among the guests were a band who perform Abba hits."

1 February: "Gladiator Shadow is a self-confessed steroid abuser." As usual, Vanessa's interest in the story is entirely domestic: "I just don't know how to tell my five-and-eight-year-old girls why their hero has betrayed their trust."

8 February: "Forgive me if I do a spot of name-dropping," Vanessa pleads. And what a name it is: before a recent TV appearance, John Major had his nose powder-puffed by Carole, "the make-up magician who spends hours making me look almost human for the *Vanessa* show".

15 February: Paula Yates and Bob Geldof are having marriage difficulties. "You can bet your *Big Breakfast* they'll deal with it together, with kindness and humour — and protect their children," Vanessa reassures us. How does she know? "I've been on the bed with Paula Yates..." Of course.

DOING THE ROUNDS

ON 23 days in the last six months it has not been possible to admit an acutely ill psychiatric patient to a private or NHS bed anywhere in the whole of Cambridgeshire, Essex, Suffolk or Norfolk.

Two weeks ago, there was no secure bed for dangerous psychiatric patients south of **York**, and it is not unheard of for there to be none in the UK. Such patients have to be detained in prisons where they receive substandard care. The only way to find beds is if a judge invites Mrs Bottomley to explain why there aren't any. She invariably fails to appear, but a bed always does.

● BEDS are also at a premium at **London's St Thomas's Hospital**. A woman recently opted for a private operation to remove the remains of her miscarriage because there was no NHS bed available that evening. Meanwhile at **Birmingham's Good (No) Hope hospital**, Ken Hindle had to spend the first 12 hours after his heart attack on a trolley in casualty due to a lack of beds.

● JOHN SHENNAN, a consultant surgeon at **Wirral's Arrow Park hospital**, is so convinced of his dexterity with a laporoscope that he drives a red Rolls-Royce, registration LAP 1. The effect of this publicity has been diminished of late because of thoughtless drivers occupying his parking space. This has so incensed him he recently demanded that a security officer should be assigned to protect his space... or he would cancel outpatients.

● ON 6 February at 8.30am, Pamela Hardyment arrived at the **Hampstead's Royal Free hospital** as instructed for an operation to alleviate the complications of a previous operation in 1994. She was told this would be at 4.30pm and was given a pre-med injection at 3.30pm. At 6pm, her surgeon pitched up to say that "the anaesthetist and theatre sister have gone home and I can't do it alone". She has now gone to France to see if the service is better over there.

"There's a 20% chance that the contents haven't been fiddled"

● DR Surendra Saxena is the proud recipient of two Thank U awards from **Rochdale community health council** for service to his patients. He was to receive a third this year — until he was sent to prison for issuing 89 false prescriptions for Geonotropin, an anabolic steroid, worth more than £100,000. Dr Saxena will now have to wait three years for his next nomination.

● THE **United Leeds Hospital Trust** certainly knows how to alienate its "customer" base. First it closed **Chapel Allerton Hospital** against the wishes of staff, patients and locals. Now it is trying to flog the 17-acre site for, you guessed it, an out-of-town shopping development plus fast-food outlets, filling station, giant carpark and masses of health-threatening car-borne pollution.

O·B·N

SIR—The job of a junior doctor is indispensable. But no one should kid himself that it is just as valuable as that of a tycoon.

A tycoon creates wealth, enabling a multitude of taxes to be paid, which, in turn, funds the jobs of junior doctors. But a junior doctor is paid by the state and pays his taxes out of his state-derived salary.

Precisely because we value people like junior doctors so highly, it is important to civilisation to pay tycoons hugely, while the rest of us find our rewards in other ways, often no less pleasant.

S.H. MURRAY WELLS
Letter to D. Telegraph

Submitted by Barry Heath.

£10 paid for all entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

DONNA HILL, business manager (women's health) at **London's Whittington hospital**, has written to a patient to explain why her operation was cancelled. "We are only treating urgent cases from Haringey, because the hospital has overperformed on its contract with the health authority due to a large increase in emergency admissions. We are however able to accommodate patients whose GPs are fundholders as their emergency admissions have not increased. As your GP is one, I am pleased to tell you that your operation can, in fact, proceed. I must apologise that your admission was cancelled as this was clearly an error."

M.D.

DOWN ON THE FARM

WITH media interest focused on animal welfare, sales of organic "welfare-friendly" chickens are booming, especially in the south-east. But according to a leading Midlands producer of organic chickens, fewer than half the "organic" birds sold on the London market have been anywhere near an organic farm.

Despite numerous pleas to trading standards officers, no enthusiasm has been shown for tracking down the rip-off merchants who are spoiling the trade. Legitimate producers, whose costs are easily double those of conventional broiler growers, wonder what they have to do to protect their reputation.

One place they need not look for support is the ministry of agriculture — despite their leader, William Waldegrave, and his well-known interest in animal welfare in dairy farming. He has just announced government spending plans on "biotechnology" amounting to £35 million for the year 1995-96.

This compares with his predecessor's miserly spending of £1.5 million in support of organic farming (*Eye* 827) and current spending plans of £3 million on the Natural Environment Research Council. When it comes to aiding "welfare friendly" farming as opposed to genetic engineering, it is clear where Droopy Willie stands.

AGRI-BIZ, however, is not without its problems, and British sugar beet growers are crying foul over European commission proposals to cut national sugar quotas.

The pressure for cuts comes from the Gatt agreement, which over the next five years will progressively reduce the amount of sugar EC countries are allowed to export on to the world market.

The commission's idea of fairness is to impose across the board cuts — but this ignores the relative values of sugar produced in each of the member states. France, for instance, produces 3.8 million tonnes a year and consumes 2.05 million tonnes, 85 percent more than it needs. Germany produces 20 per cent more than it consumes; and Denmark over-produces by 91 per cent.

Little ol' UK, however, only produces 1.14 million tonnes, just slightly more than half what its sweet-guzzling population consumes. Despite the shortfall, the EC may be looking to cut production even further, putting at risk some of the 26,000 jobs in the sugar and associated industries.

Needless to say, with big business interests at stake, Droopy is actually taking an interest in the problem. But with most member states over-producing, he is likely to be outvoted in negotiations, presuming he does not sell out in exchange for a deal on live exports.

THE delicious Roquefort-style Lanark Blue cheese is now back on sale, despite the efforts of Clydesdale hygiene gestapo to close down the operation (*Eye* 865) after a listeria scare.

One unsavoury aspect of the whole affair, however, has been the attempts of local MEP Ken Collins to sabotage attempts to save this prestigious marque.

In a letter to the *Sunday Torygraph*, on local radio and with threats of calling in the press complaints commission to other papers running the story, Collins has sought to extol the virtues of the hygiene police who should be "left without interference" to ensure that "the ordinary citizen's life is not placed in danger".

Apart from the fact that the "ordinary citizen" is unlikely to eat Lanark Blue — it is a much sought-after gourmet item — Collins neglects to say that the strain of listeria found in the cheese is not harmful, and no lives are at risk.

Approached by Humphrey Errington, owner of the marque, to give his side of the story, Collins he has not responded to urgent requests for a meeting. It seems that the MEP, who chairs the European parliament's committee on the environment, public health and consumer protection, is more interested in relying on ignorance of the facts than he is on protecting one of his own constituents who provides vital employment in an area not exactly overwhelmed with job opportunities.

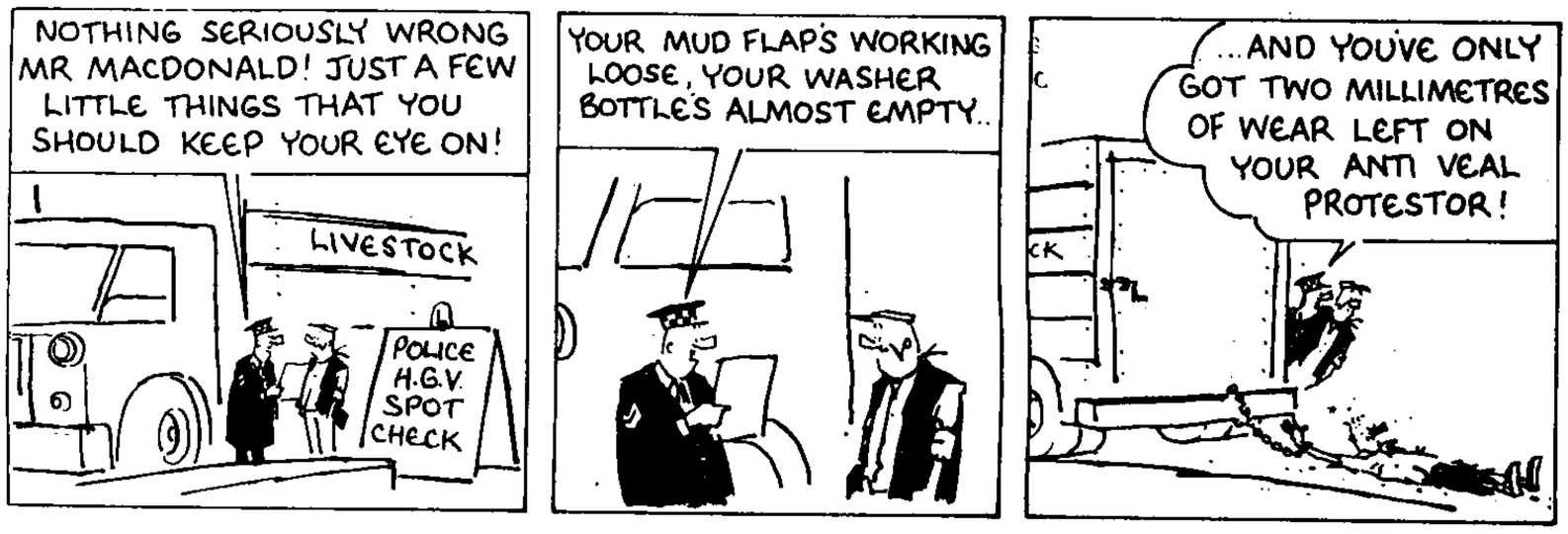
DALES farmers are going up the wall, as it were, as they bemoan the destruction of thousands of yards of dry stone walling, which was swept away in the recent floods.

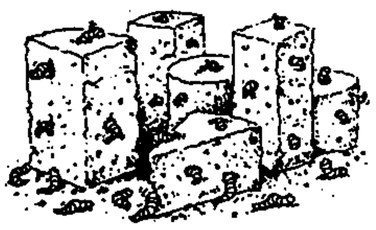
Although much of the walling is in an "environmentally sensitive area" for which maintenance grants are payable, mad officials are refusing grants because restoration does not come under the category of "maintenance". Contrast this with the benevolence of the Dutch government, which was doshing out millions of guilders to flood affected farmers before the waters had even receded. Once again the "level playing field" is looking decidedly tilted.

'New Muckspreader'

Old Macdonald

ALBERT


NOTHING SERIOUSLY WRONG MR MACDONALD! JUST A FEW LITTLE THINGS THAT YOU SHOULD KEEP YOUR EYE ON!
LIVESTOCK
POLICE H.G.V. SPOT CHECK
YOUR MUD FLAP'S WORKING LOOSE, YOUR WASHER BOTTLE'S ALMOST EMPTY..
...AND YOUVE ONLY GOT TWO MILLIMETRES OF WEAR LEFT ON YOUR ANTI VEAL PROTESTOR!



THE Rotten Borough Advertiser

ASK THE FAMILY

WHAT a cosy place is Saltley Action Centre (SAC), the Birmingham law centre that receives £100,000 a year from the munificent legal aid fund.

A registered charity that opened in 1977, SAC is chaired by Labour councillor Abdul Malik — for whom, it seems, charity begins at home. SAC's main legal advice worker is Sajid Malik. He has no legal qualifications, but he is Abdul's son.

One might have expected a law centre to be scrupulous about filing its accounts with the Charity Commission. Not so SAC. Its last filed accounts are three years old. That of course means that the web of leases set up by SAC — which has sublet part of its premises in Alum Rock Road — has remained unquestioned.

One of the main leaseholders is the Minority Resources Centre (MRC), whose secretary is, er, Abdul Malik, and whose main advice worker is Abdul Malik's nephew. The MRC gets about £13,000 in city council grants each year for rent and the like — and has sent accounts to the city each year claiming that it has paid all its bills.

Another organisation, the Bangladeshi Workers Association, is in a similar position. It receives £24,000 a year from the city and has sent accounts showing that it has paid all its rent and other bills. But a report on the SAC — written by its solicitor — says rent and service charges have not been paid since 1988 and that the SAC is owed vast sums! (Incidentally, the law centre's vice-chair, Mr Nur Ul-Haq, is a close friend of Abdul Malik and chairs the Bangladeshi Workers Association.)

The big question of course is: where has the money gone? It's certainly disappeared from the accounts, but who could have it? It is a total mystery — especially to Abdul Malik.

Meanwhile at Birmingham council tax office there is bafflement at Mr Malik's claim for council tax benefit on which he has accidentally omitted to declare his income from the council. That amounted to some £3,000 last year; and this year it will be boosted by another £6,000 thanks to his nomination to the board of the Heartlands development corporation quango.

Mr Malik also has his invalidity benefit to fall back on. He got that because he found work impossible through infirmity — and it's come in pretty handy now he's out and about so much on council business: as vice-chairman of urban renewal... a senior member of the all-powerful finance and management committee... the senior Asian on the Labour group executive... etc, etc.

ABUSED IN CARE

TEN YEARS after Jasmine Beckford was killed by her stepfather after Bent took her off its child protection register, the council still doesn't know how to look after children in care.

A new confidential report shows how two toddlers suffered sexual and physical abuse after being placed with foster parents chosen by council social workers. The children, taken into care by Bent soon after they were born in the late 80s, were sexually abused by a babysitter who is now serving a three-year jail sentence.

The children were later handed to another set of foster parents where they were tied to their beds; beaten; and sent to school on a breakfast of water and mouldy bread. Nearly six months after bruises were noticed on one child's face, the children were eventually moved on.

Why the unpardonable delay? As the report says: "There appears to be no specific procedures relating to complaints of child abuse against foster parents." Four social workers have now been suspended but no managerial head has so far rolled.

Elsewhere in Bent, meanwhile, councillors have been abusing each other: two Asian Tories, Chuni Chavda and Navin Patel, evidently smarting at losing control of the council, have been at each other's throats.

Chavda launched himself at Patel in the Tory leader's office — a painful area — after the last council meeting and had to be pulled off by colleagues. What had Patel done? Before joining the Tories he was a Labour activist for 20 years, and with the two parties so evenly matched Labour has been trying to lure him back.

NO FUN FOR THE OLD

EVEN by Lambeth standards the current financial mess breaks new ground in showing how not to run a local authority.

Chief sufferers will be council tenants, particularly pensioners, and anyone unlucky enough to be associated with the education department where £5 million has gone "missing" just as its budget is to be cut by £15 million and 500 jobs are to go.

Council tenants face a rent rise *six times the rate of inflation* as the hung-council deals with a £28 million budget cut and a monumental £9 million cock-up in the capital budget. Nearly half the rent increase has been caused by the need to raise £5 million to pay for the sacking of hundreds of staff across the borough.

In another desperate quick-fix measure the council has decided to flog 300 of its most rundown properties to raise a further £3 million.

Prospects for pensioners are particularly bleak. They face not only an average £5.50 a week rent increase, like other council tenants, but two new charges. Those who live in council-run sheltered accommodation face a £5 a week service charge. And those pensioners who rely on home-helps will be hit by the introduction of a non-means tested charge that will cost some as much as an extra £8 per week.

RED FACE OF THE WEEK

TAVISTOCK: West Devon council's redesigning of the bus station has been a total cock-up. Thanks to the architects, drivers can only reverse their buses out of the station, while railings make the new loading bays unusable (because the architects didn't know from which end passengers alight). Because of the congestion, bus companies now park and manoeuvre their vehicles in the road outside — while the new bus station, rebuilt with £200,000 of European community money, is used as a free football pitch by local kids.

IN BRIEF

RICHMOND: Hello again to Peter Bradley, the Westminster Labour councillor who has been hired by London & Edinburgh Trust to put a PR gloss on the grim ice-rink saga. The rink was sold by the Liberals to LET, who undertook to build a new £20 million leisure centre (along with luxury flats). It hasn't; but it has given the council £2.5 million instead. Locals are now taking the council to the European court for "selling" permission for such a paltry sum. Even in Tory Blair's party supporting replacement of a much-loved family asset with a speculative development is a bit rich.

WAKEFIELD: Fireworks are expected at an industrial tribunal next week when the council is accused of unfairly dismissing loyal employee Mary Sanderson. Her sacking followed circulation within the council of a poem containing legover allegations about the leadership. Do go...

OXFORD: Property owners in Divinity Road have been flatly denied council permission to convert their houses into flats — all except Liberal Democrat councillor Margaret Godden. She was successful in her application, even though she could not provide off-street parking. Instead she promised opponents on the planning committee to let a homeless family occupy the flat. Well, the new tenant is Ms Rhonda Riachi: not a homeless family, exactly, but a Labour councillor and member of the, er, planning committee.

HACKNEY: Abdul Zainu Deen owes the impoverished council £6,685.96p in rent arrears — not bad for a barrister employed by the council and whose duties until recently included, er, chasing tenants for rent arrears through the county court. Mercedes-driving Deen believes the amount is "exorbitant and a breakdown is needed" to show how much he really owes. But then he also thinks the debt is so old it should be written off.

LUVVIES

Q. French?

A. I've been teaching myself. I have an apartment in Paris. I use it as a refuge, to be a real person. I can sit in cafes for hours without being bothered. I can observe instead of being observed. Instead of living the high life, I can go get a Coke and a pizza — I don't even like Coke and pizza, but I do it because it makes me feel such a rebel.

KYLIE MINOGUE
Mail on Sunday 'YOU' Magazine

Submitted by Robert Hunt.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries printed.

Yobs
HUSBAND
ENGLAND! ENGLAND!
RULE BRITANNIA.. BRITANNIA RULES THE WAVES..
Er. would you just answer guilty or not guilty. please.

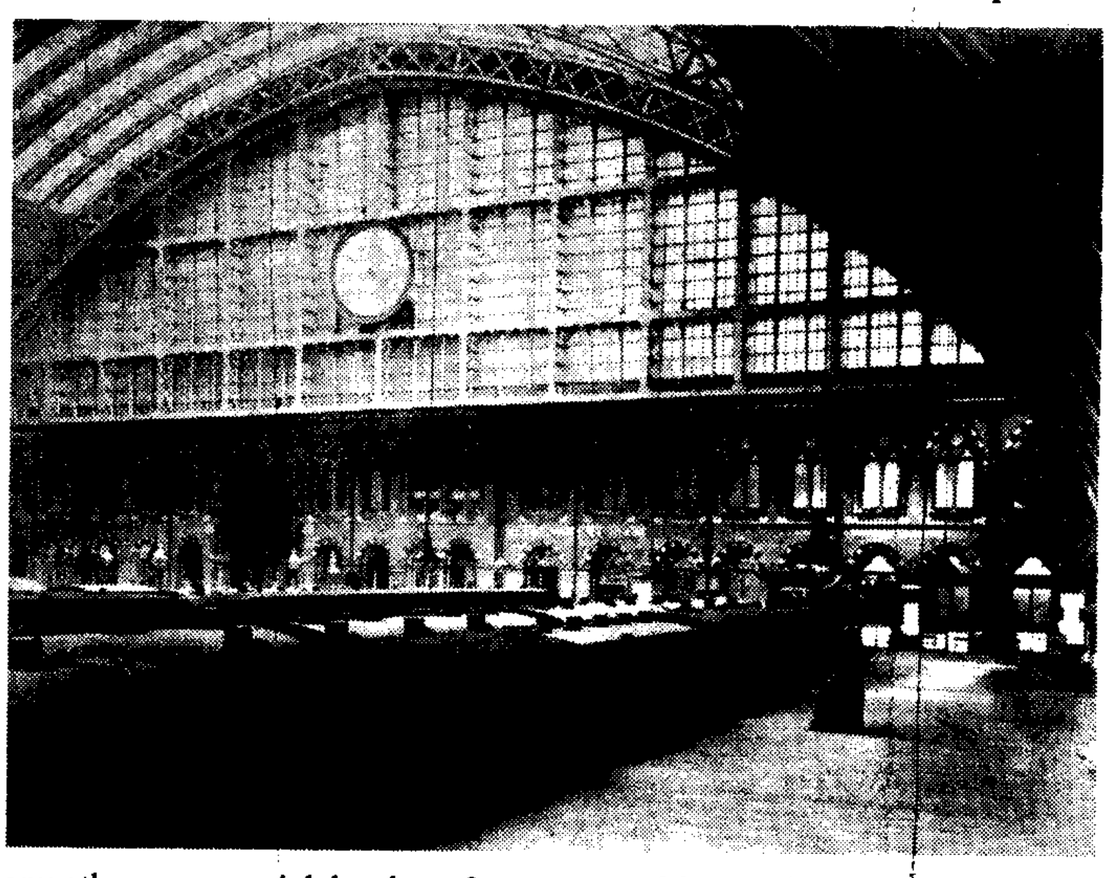
NOOKS and CORNERS

THE scaffolding is now down and the exterior of the Midland Grand hotel at St Pancras, newly repaired and cleaned, looks magnificent. At last.

This is the masterpiece of Sir Gilbert Scott which British Rail neglected for decades and tried to demolish in 1966. Not that St Pancras is now safe, however: the station itself and the surrounding area are threatened by misguided proposals to make it into an international station for trains from the Channel tunnel.

In the late 1980s a huge amount of time and effort was wasted in the parliamentary procedures over the bill to construct an international station underneath King's Cross station. Eventually the penny dropped and the blinkered incompetents now in charge of the wreckage of our railway system realised that the scheme was prohibitively expensive as well as unnecessarily destructive — and stupid. We told them so (*Eyes passim*). So it was abandoned; and now that the high speed line from the Channel is to cross the Thames into east London, the new wheeze is to bring the tunnel trains into the stupendous but underused train shed of St Pancras station.

So a new bill has been submitted and is about to go before select committee. Again, much time and money must be spent by those petitioning against the bill — even though it is not yet known who will actually build the new lines (and the chosen contractor may well redesign them). In the first King's Cross bill, there was a notorious clause exempting the works from the normal listed building consent procedure. This time, the bill again proposes to bend the rules, but Union Railways — the private company which hopes to run the thing — has formed a cosy relationship with English Heritage to sort out any problems. This the Victorian Society rightly opposes — arguing that if, thanks to privatisation, the railway promoters are to be private companies, why should they not be treated like any other commercial developer?



But why should there be any listed building problems anyway? Because the international trains are so long that St Pancras will have to be lengthened by 275 metres north of W.H. Barlow's wonderful train shed, and this involves the removal of the (listed) iron gas-holders which make such a fine backdrop to the view north of King's Cross. Furthermore, Union Railways wants to bring commuters from east Kent along the new line, and their trains will need three extra platforms tacked on to the east side of St Pancras. These require the removal of the German Gymnasium and Stanley Buildings — two interesting structures which were vigorously defended against the earlier scheme. Never mind that all this makes no practical sense; the only reason for bringing Kent trains into St Pancras is that the treasury offers a subsidy for commuter traffic.

It has been left to independent consulting engineers Alan Baxter & Associates to point out the huge flaws in this scheme. For a start, Kent commuters don't want to be in St Pancras; they want to be in the City. Any time saved on the high speed rail link compared with a conventional train into Cannon Street or Blackfriars will be lost by having to change at St Pancras and get on the underground. The answer is to divert these trains at Stratford on to existing lines or the projected Crossrail or, if they really must come into St Pancras, send them down the Thameslink tunnels to Farringdon and Moorgate.

This notion has been put to Union Railways, eliciting no response. The truth is that these new commercial operators dislike the idea of their trains going on another company's tracks. So much for the idea that privatisation is in the public interest.

Furthermore the tube station at King's Cross is already highly stretched and London Underground estimates that it will reach a state of critical overcrowding by the year 2002 even *without* international passengers and some 6,000 Kent commuters. But this, perhaps is a mere detail. The real objection to the proposals for St Pancras is fundamental. What is needed is an interchange international station for long-distance trains; so why put, say, a Brussels to Manchester express into St Pancras when it will only have to reverse out again? This is plain stupid. But we cannot expect common sense from the incompetents and pygmy successors to Brunel and the Stephensons who attempt to run our cruelly misused railway system.

The best answer was proposed three years ago, again by Alan Baxter & Associates: a sub-surface through-station in the middle of the King's Cross goods yard site. This would have the best links with existing railway lines, be connected with a reopened York Road station on the Piccadilly Line (so avoiding overcrowded King's Cross), and be the focus of a coherent urban regeneration of the derelict land around. But we cannot expect Union Railways or our railway-hating government to grasp anything so sensible and practical, can we?

So St Pancras is to be spoiled instead, as a cheaper alternative. Such are the depths to which the country that invented railways has fallen. Perhaps the answer is to sell the entire system to the SNCF.

'Piloti'

Pseuds Corner

This [*The Western Canon*] is a book to teach you how to read, and how to love literature. [Harold] Bloom is a lovely soul, paddling in deep essences. His big love brushes aside our particles of resentment, collapses our little pile of quibbles and heads for the great rooms of literature.

JAMES WOOD
Guardian

Marcel Proust and I are sometimes placed together as novelists — in libraries that shelve authors alphabetically — and though he was no angler, he was one of the first writers to express the tremendous power of memory and the senses.

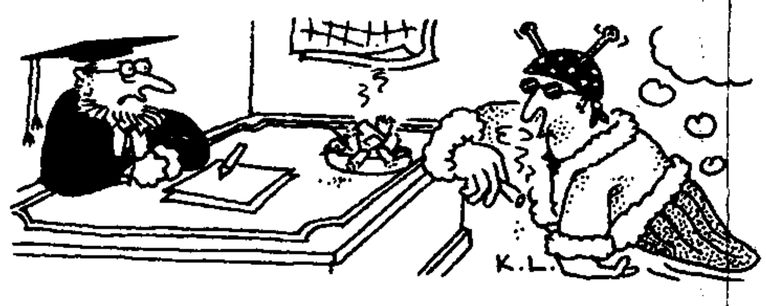
For him, a tinkling bell or a madeleine dipped in tea could bring past experiences flooding back; and much of the complex pleasure of fishing lies, I'm sure, in its associative richness.

DAVID PROFUMO
Weekend Telegraph

... It was extraordinary. He [Dominic Lawson] was in mid-sentence when the mousse arrived. He paused, as if for thought, and in five fluid scooping motions had emptied the dish. Then he returned to the Spectator's politics as if the mousse had never existed.

Independent on Sunday

1. What is the connection between a hand-made notice in a Laundromat in Los Angeles and The Orb's CD sleeves and publicity? (Go on, have a go!)



2. Write a brief epitaph for one of the following: River Phoenix, Kurt Cobain, Dennis Potter, Ayrton Senna....

17. Explain what you feel about the following:

a) The Criminal Justice Bill.

b) The relative merits of Blur and Suede.

c) The transport of calves for veal production.

Interview questionnaire
University of Wolverhampton School of Art & Design

It is profoundly significant that post-Einsteinian science has also broken from the rigidities of the dichotomous, materialistic Newtonian-Cartesian-Marxist bandwagon.

Newsweek

Jeff Stone's bedroom: "The bedstead is a cheap reproduction but the sheets are the best there are — Pratesi — because every night we put our bodies between them." The fragility of the inexpensive white fabric at the windows contrasts with the heaviness of the nails which hold the curtains to the wall.

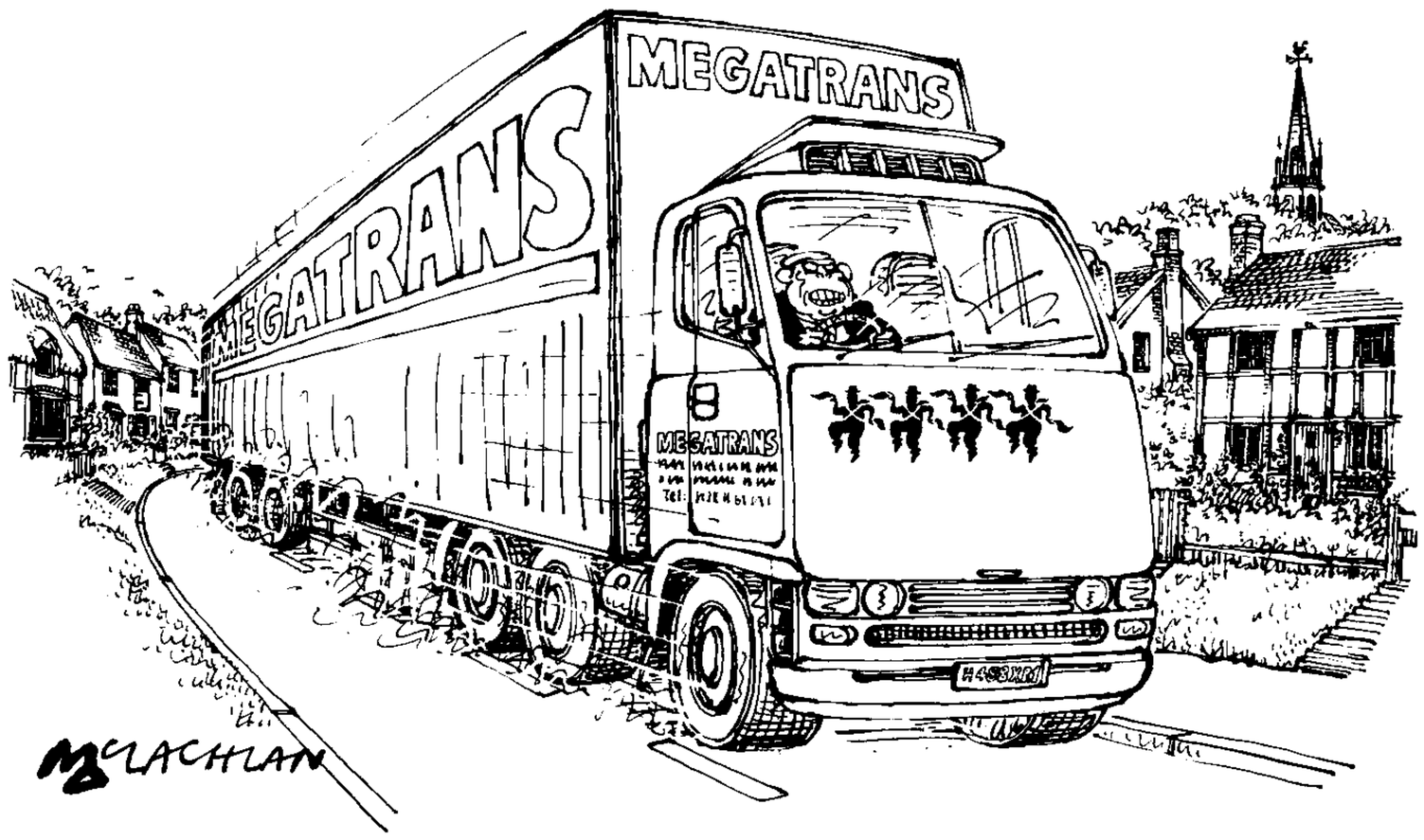
Financial Times

A sense of transparency and emptiness permeates the space. The world of work, of production, of the pragmatic, seems far away. The placement of 'works' in this space seems almost a perverse act in itself. Yet in a sense these works do not occupy the space any more than a series of echoes defines the space which registers them. These works could be said to undermine any prioritising of intrinsic facticity in the viewer's assessment of the art-object. Not that 'illusion' is a dominant characteristic — simply that the interpretative overspill generated in the interplay of looking at and 'reading' the object/image fills the space more certainly than the various objects and images which comprise the works.

Infante Exhibition
Liverpool

CONTRIBUTORS: A. Rusbridger, D. Allsop, W. Holden, M. Ruddy, P. Osorio, R. Clarke, D. Veres.

£10 paid for entries



LORRY SAFETY

BRAKE, the new campaign for lorry safety, alerts the *Eye* to new efforts by the government to help cowboy road hauliers (see *Eye* 864).

The transport department's targets for its vehicle inspectors relate simply to the number of lorries stopped and examined. Under pressure because of pitifully low staffing, the inspectors have little time to carry out thorough investigations of hauliers who are known to break the law regularly.

In eastern England, for example, the inspectorate managed to meet its October target by examining thousands of lorries serving British Sugar factories in the area. British Sugar, however, is known to have a strict policy to ensure that any lorry calling at its premises complies with the law. Consequently, hardly any prosecutions arose for the period concerned, and the DoT was happy the target had been met but left rogue operators free to cut corners to their hearts' contents.

Quite apart from the unfair advantage this farcical inspection system gives to lorries over rail freight, it also allows cowboy firms to undercut the honest hauliers and brings pressure to bear on the latter to cut corners or go bust.

EDUCATION NEWS

WHEN the chief inspector of schools announced the country's most improved schools to huge media fanfare, the announcement came as the education secretary revealed that the increase in education funding for next year would be less than the rate of inflation.

The number of "improved" schools proved that even comprehensives on rapidly shrinking budgets can get better grades if they try hard. Or did it? In fact almost half the schools listed with pride were actually *deteriorating* as far as their less able pupils were concerned. Although the percentage of pupils with at least 5 grade Cs had improved it seemed to be at the expense of those with less academic ability.

Anfield Community Comprehensive in Liverpool, for example, saw a 12 percent increase in those pupils achieving at least 5 C grades. But this was offset by a depressing 11 percent increase in those awarded no GCSEs at all. In fact what Anfield achieved was a widening polarity between its high and low achievers.

SPOT checks on college courses in Birmingham have found that some of them don't actually exist.

Bournville College has "franchised out" some vocational courses to community groups — a mutually profitable arrangement as Bournville pays the groups and the Further Education Funding Council quango pays Bournville for the increase in student numbers. But four community groups' contracts have now been terminated with the "loss" of 3,000 students.

An anonymous letter warned college heads that some community groups were falsifying documents and the number of students to make profits of up to £1,200 a month per class. The vocational courses were supposedly taught in people's homes; but as the course holders were notified in advance of college checks it was easy for them to arrange a fake class to be in progress during an inspector's visit.

Following the anonymous tip-off, however, the college made inspections unannounced and found empty classrooms and not a teacher in sight.

Many of the fabricated classes were supposed to be teaching English as a second language and Islamic studies (community groups involved in the scam all belonged to the city's ethnic minorities).

While community leaders are worried that real students were missing the opportunity to study, the decision to close some of the courses was made just in time. A few days later payments of nearly £1 million were to be made to the course holders.

POLICE 5

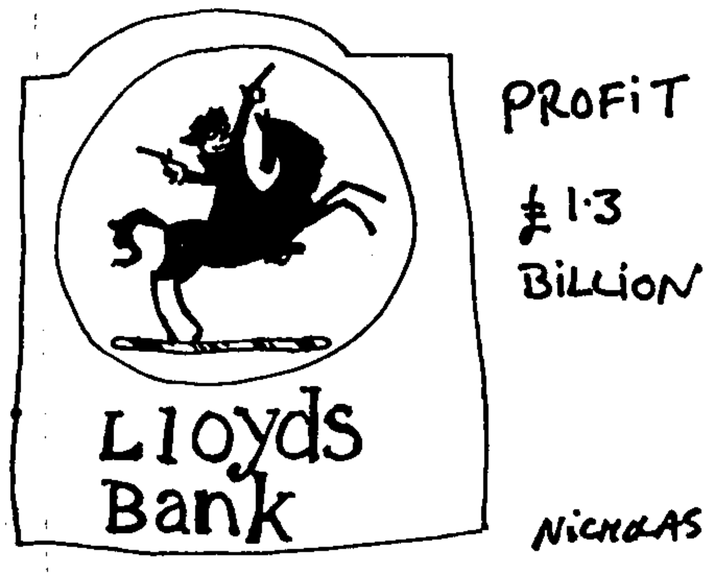
HOME secretary Michael Howard is cashing in on the one industry that has flourished since the Tories came to power — crime. He is to merge the world famous and respected Metropolitan Police Forensic Science Laboratory with the Forensic Science Service.

The consequences of the government's attempt to make profits out of every single government service are alarming: miscarriages of justice look certain to follow the merger.

This is because the Forensic Science Service charges heavily for its expertise and has done so since it was made a government agency three years ago. Every item sent by Knacker for forensic testing costs £197 per item plus VAT — so to test a pair of slippers costs double that. Oh, and the "call out" fee is £300 per forensic scientist for the first hour, plus £75 an hour thereafter.

Until now the Met laboratory, based in Lambeth and employing 340 staff, has been a free in-house service for Met police, who deal with about a third of the nation's serious crime. Police chiefs wanted to keep the lab but Howard has won behind-the-scenes battle to turn it into a money-spinner.

However, throughout the country police authorities have actually been sending less work to the six FSS labs (at Aldermaston, Birmingham, Chepstow, Chorley, Huntingdon and Wetherby) because of the high FSS charges. The implications are worrying: when vital evidence is no longer available the guilty may go free and the innocent convicted. In London scientists reckon the Met will have to find around £15 million a year to pay for services it has hitherto had for free.



Letters

Private Eye

Lord Nolan writes

Sir,

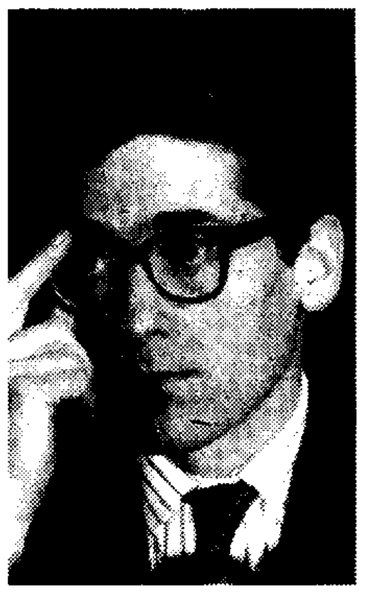
I have read with interest last week's PRIVATE EYE *in which you compare our questioning unfavourably with that of the Scott inquiry. You should, however, bear in mind that we have two very different remits. The Scott inquiry was set up to investigate specific allegations. Two important consequences flow from its setting up as a formal judicial inquiry: first, evidence given to the inquiry attracted a degree of privilege; secondly, Sir Richard Scott has, rightly, had to make sure that he has heard the full evidence from all those involved and is now going through the lengthy process of giving those criticised an opportunity to comment on that criticism.*

In setting up our committee the prime minister specifically ruled out investigation of individual allegations. Instead he gave us a very wide ranging remit to advise on all aspects of standards in public life and to produce a first report in six months. The committee's view was that it was important that we should meet this very tight timetable and we therefore decided to focus on the key areas which we are at present looking at for our first report. Unlike Sir Richard Scott and those who appeared before him, neither we nor our witnesses have any protection against the law of libel. All our witnesses attend voluntarily. Consequently although we may touch on individual events we specifically do not make accusations or carry out investigations. We saw witnesses involved in the decision on the location of the intermediate station of the Channel tunnel rail link to get a feel for the process in which it is claimed that lobbying had an influence.

I can assure you that neither I nor the members of my committee find difficulty with the exclusion of our investigatory role. Indeed, we feel there is considerable advantage in being able to report quickly on these important issues and to continue as a standing committee to report on other matters.

Yours sincerely.
LORD NOLAN,
Committee on Standards in Public Life.

Lookalike



Laurie

Maxwell

Sir,

I wonder if any of your readers have noticed the startling resemblance between that well-known entrepreneur Kevin Maxwell, and the comedic thespian Hugh Laurie. I am sure they must be related.

ENA B. GOLDRING,
London.

Magazine on tape for deaf

Bexley Times Leader

Target practice

Sir,

I subscribe to PRIVATE EYE *because it provides me with background information which our "free" press lacks the integrity to publish. But care is needed to get the information correct, and not to allow correspondents' own prejudices or sloppy reporting to erode your credibility — it can be more damaging than losing a libel case.*

I was at the meeting at Gateshead you report on page 8 of the current EYE. *The audience was not "hand-picked" — no one asked me or any others I met there to attend, and tickets were not "distributed by MPs" — you had to ask for them from the regional office of the Labour party, which is in the same building as one MP (and a number of commercial organisations) but a separate office. Since* THE WORLD TONIGHT *gave similar inaccurate information I faxed the attached letter but received no acknowledgement.*

Blair is an easy target, but please do not drift into a SUNDAY MAIL *knee-jerk reaction to him and all his works — there will be a need for accurate inside information if you are to inhibit corruption in the Labour party — please keep up the good work.*

Yours sincerely,
K. PANIN.

Newcastle.

Lookalike

Twit

Bushell

Sir,

Has anyone else noticed the striking similarity between Roald Dahl's "foul and... extremely horrid old man" Mr Twit, and Britain's foremost sage, Mr Garry Bushell? A single vowel change in the word "Twit" provides us with further illumination, methinks. Perhaps we should be told?

Yours sincerely,
MARC HAYNES,

Headingley, Leeds.

Radio talk

Sir,

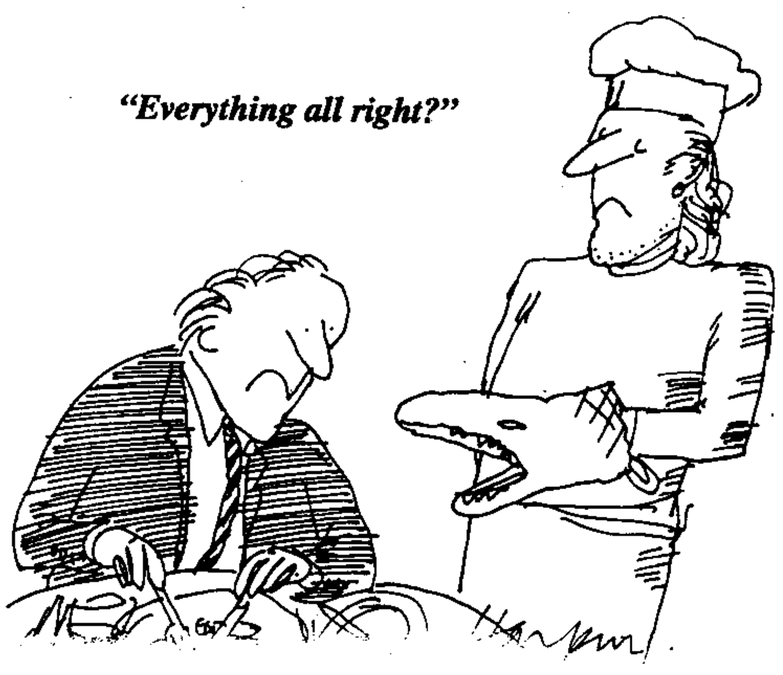
The EYE *should be above criticism of GLR (*EYE *864).*

It is true that GLR has a relatively small audience. However, should the metric of success really be the percentage of London's radio audience? That GLR does not seek to boost its audience share by playing the kind of "music" spewed out by the likes of Capital Radio is only to the station's credit.

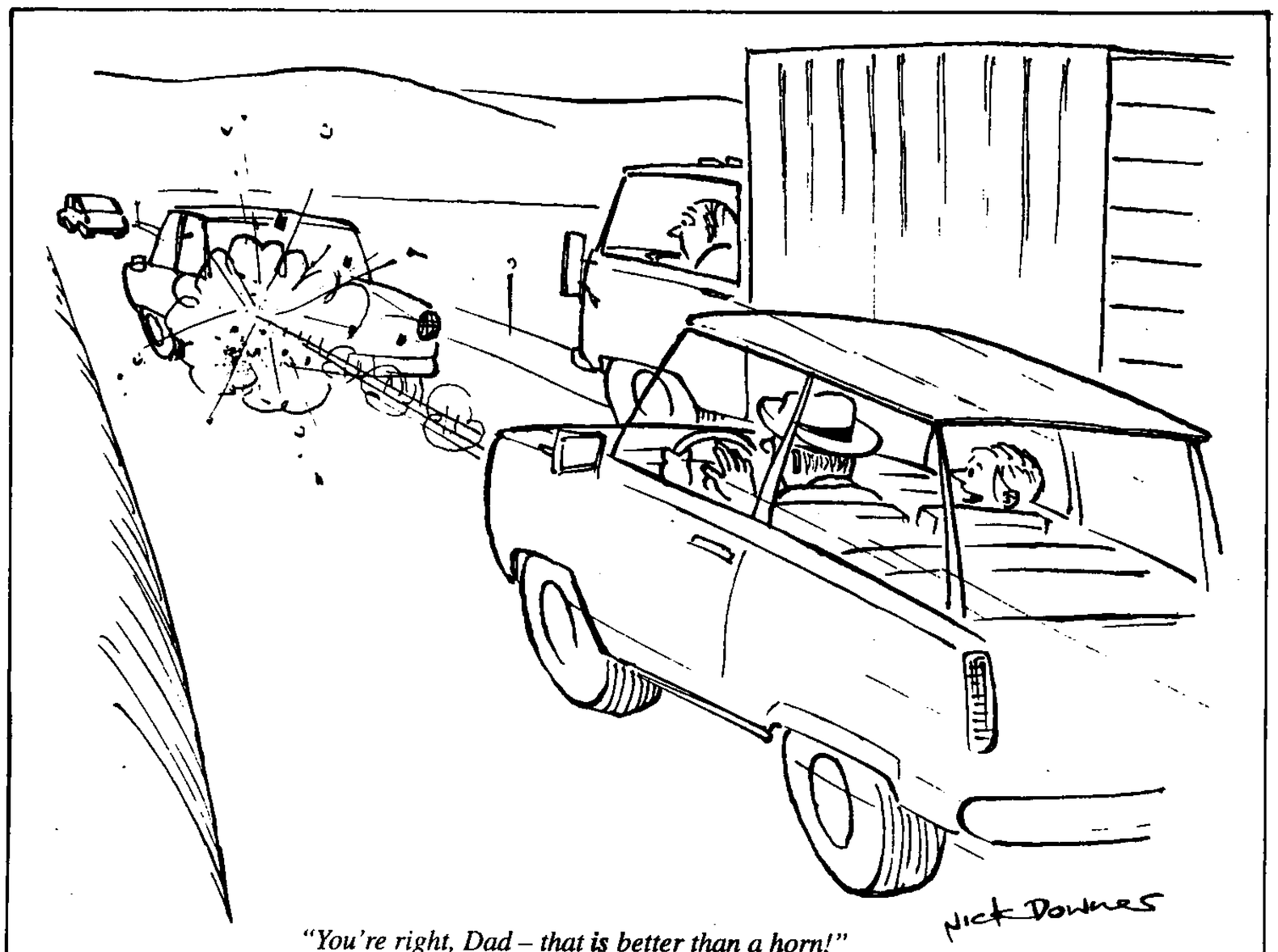
I moved to Manchester last year and can find no equivalent to GLR; I rather miss it.

Yours faithfully,
JEFFREY HILL,

Altrincham, Cheshire.



"Everything all right?"



"You're right, Dad – that is better than a horn!"

Expert tease

Sir,

Re: "Bee Sting"

Your article on 10 February saddened us. Dr Greenaway is a plant biologist and conducted some excellent work at Oxford on propolis three to four years ago. Although he is not a doctor he did conclude that propolis had some medical benefits (see copy of his report of his work). However, I do not think he can claim to be a national expert. I can of course put you in touch with some national experts.

The research we are sponsoring — stimulated by contact with us from Oxford — is due to start next week. We will be developing: a fingerprint for propolis (ie an international standard); and examining its role in treating a range of illnesses, including MS.

I have collected probably the world's largest body of research about propolis — around 600 scientific and medical papers. I can also put you in touch with doctors, dentists and vets using propolis as a medicine in the UK. I am enclosing a sample of medical research.

Allergic reaction is well-known — all our customers are warned about this on the product; many people are allergic to milk. Dr L. McKewan, who is an allergy specialist in London, uses propolis to treat certain allergies (see his paper enclosed).

I am contacting Dr Greenaway (incidentally **not** *Professor) to ask him to produce the evidence to which he refers.*

However, if you have that information I would be glad to receive it as we should obviously be aware of it. However, as far as I am aware no such evidence exists — but see Canadian research on treatment of herpes with propolis.

I am sending some samples for you to try at the office.

Yours sincerely,
JAMES FEARNLEY,

Chairman, Bee Health Ltd.

Dawn chorus

Sir,

Children's rights; Parents of Orkney children taken in the 1991 "dawn raids" have been giving evidence to MPs on the Children (Scotland) Bill, yet recent reports make no mention of children from another family still held in care. Taken in 1990, these children had no contact with their mother for seven months; were deprived of correspondence; repeatedly questioned; and denied either a curator, hearing representative or solicitor.

children were lied to, coached and bribed; and tapes and interview transcripts went unscrutinised by key officials.

At Lord Clyde's inquiry, the social work director admitted there was no evidence of the younger "W" children being abused, yet children's hearings since 1990 have "rubber-stamped" prior decisions, kept children from hearings, failed to discover children's wishes regarding access, sanctioned a "no access" policy, accepted social work abuse claims, changed a hearing decision to prevent a mother going to appeal, cut access completely for the youngest children and refused to disclose the substance of reports to a hearing.

Not surprisingly, children's panel members are now being investigated, yet two children are about to be adopted. What price children's rights?

Yours faithfully,
ANDREW FENTON

Secretary, Orkney Seven Action Group.

Gerry pandering

Sir,

Truth will out. Now we know why it all went wrong: Gerry Anderson told INSIDE ULSTER *television news: "I was being turned into a Radio 4 broadcaster which I objected to most strongly" (January 1995). If he was so unhappy, and the listeners were so unhappy, why was Gerry detained for so long behind bars in his own "Country", apparently against his will? If Gerry was so unhappy, why did he take the money? We think we should be told.*

ANNIE JOHNSTON, Radio 4 Watch Ireland.
RACHEL MAWHOOD, Radio 4 Watch UK.

Expletives deleted

Sir,

Allow me to put you straight on a few facts concerning your entertaining tale of my encounter with Martin Walker, "a glorious moment that will live in the memories of GRAUNIAD *news hacks forever" (Street of Shame,* EYE *865).*

1. I never uttered the words attributed to me, ie "Fuck off, you slimy git." Nor did I utter any other expletive or insult.

2. As a mere 40-something, I thoroughly resent being described as ancient.

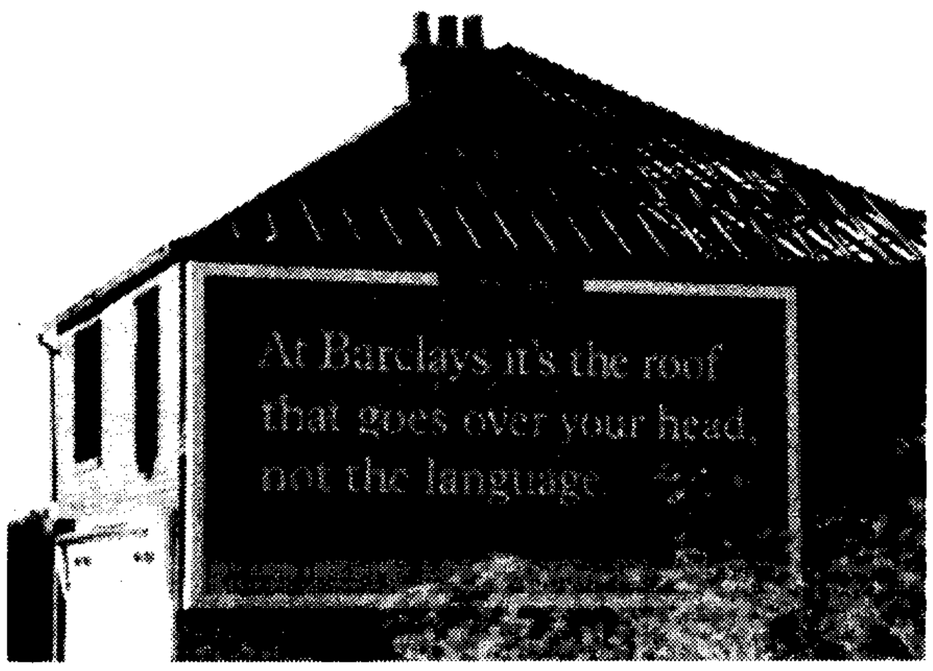
3. I was surprised to learn that I am noted for my "grumpiness". I have always considered myself to be a model of sweetness and light.

Yours in the geriatric ward,
MICHAEL BAGSHAW

The Guardian

I-SPY

Newcastle upon Tyne



Submitted by Andrew Cheshire.
£10 paid for similar submissions.
(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)

Burning desire

Sir,

Re. Halon gas in fire fighting. Despite recent criticism in PRIVATE EYE, *Halon gas remains a very effective firefighting medium. While traditional firefighting methods seek to extinguish fires by isolating one of the three principle components of fire — fuel, oxygen, heat; Halon disrupts the actual fire chemistry and puts out the fire by breaking the fire chain. A Halon-to-air concentration of 5 to 7 per cent is adequate for the purpose, while a concentration of 15 percent is normally used to ensure penetration.*

Carbon tetrachloride, once widely used for electrical fires, is dangerous by skin contact and inhalation, and in contact with fire generates deadly phosgene gas. Co2 used in switch rooms excludes oxygen, often killing any personnel in the vicinity, while a blinding Co2 snowstorm hampers any escape. Halon, which is not considered hazardous in correct concentration, in contact with fire produces irritants, one of which — perchloric acid — is corrosive, but in the minute quantities actually encountered causes slight irritation in the eyes, nose and throat, which disappears on evacuation to a clean environment.

Fatal accidents are a fact of life, however burning is not an optimum way to die. Fires in tunnels are too dreadful to contemplate and no reasonable means of fighting them should be excluded. Perhaps Halon is not environment friendly, but fire itself produces environmentally destructive materials, not least among them carbon dioxide. Thus unnecessary fires cannot be tolerated so perhaps agents such as Halon might just constitute the lesser evil.

PETER FRANKS,
Lancing, West Sussex.

Just one cornetto

Sir,

After 60 years I now have found the location of the "gondola myth" from your erudite organ (10 Feb; Red Face of the Week). It was a Delyn Tory councillor who, ever economy-minded, suggested they only purchase two gondolas and let them breed.

Age shall not wither them, nor the years confine.

Yours geriatrically,
ALEX ACHESON,
Leicester.

Take us to your Lieder

Sir,

Is the Claus Maria von Weber, the 19th century German composer who bears a striking resemblance to A.N. Wilson (Letters, 865) any relation of Carl Maria Friedrich Ernst von Weber, the 19th century German composer?

I think we should be told.

Yours faithfully,
PETER L. BRENT.
Caterham, Surrey.

Please address letters for publication to Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or e-mail to strobes@cix.compulink.co.uk (marked "For Publication").

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Fifteen per cent of people with serious mental illness commit suicide during their lifetime."
CHRIS BORN, Bath Mental Health Unit, BBC
(Matthew Coates)

"Anybody in my job steers a tightrope between being popular and being principled."
VIRGINIA BOTTOMLEY, BBC2
(A.R. Paterson)

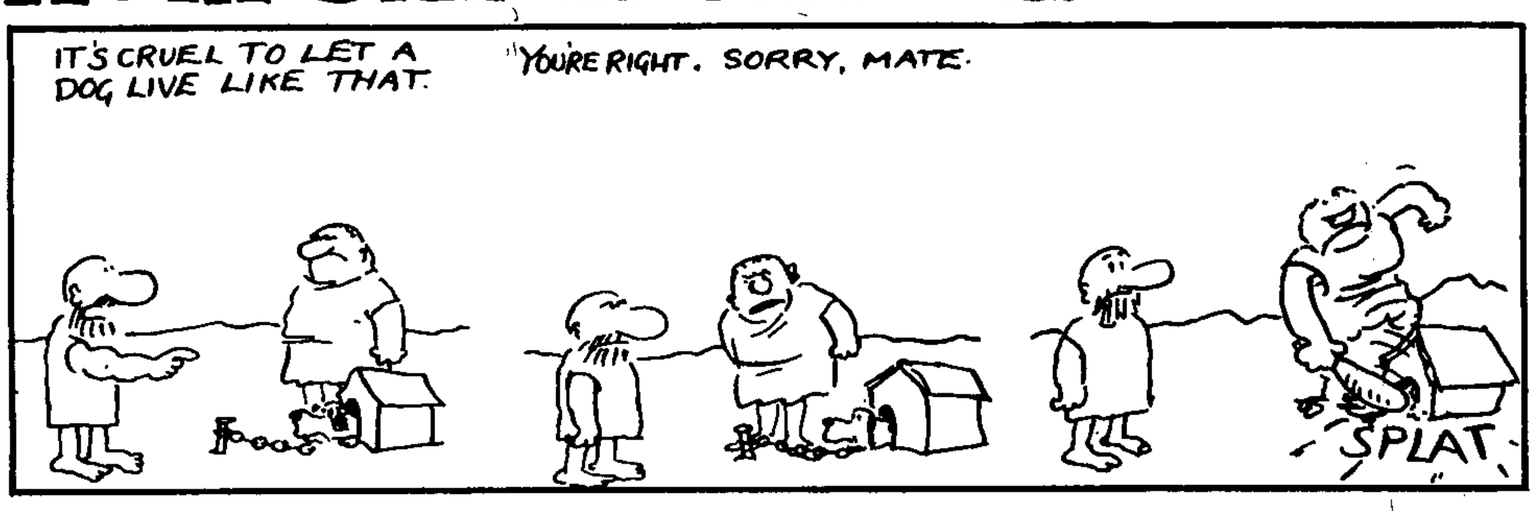
"Mr Lewis has been head of the Prison Service for two years and during that time a great deal of progress has been made, particularly in terms of escapes."
MICHAEL HOWARD, BBC2
(Gary Richmond)

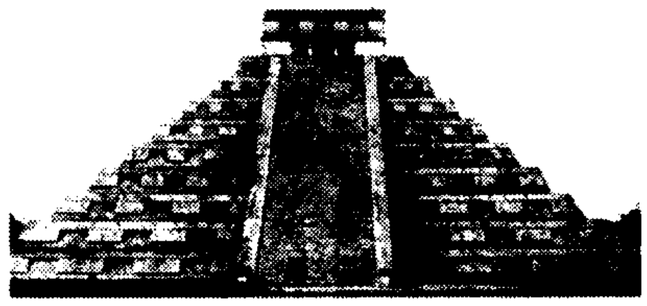
"All our trains were fully booked, and that's what caused the problem."
EUROTUNNEL SPOKESMAN, BBC
(A.D. Hopkins)

"Every single seat is absolutely packed."
RON JONES, Radio 5
(Julian Thake)

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN





Letter from **Mexico**

from Our Own Correspondent

"IF YOU owe the bank $10 million, hell you're in trouble. If you owe the bank $10 billion, hell the bank's in trouble." So said one of the Rockefellers. He could never have envisaged bankers so dumb or politicians so venial that anyone could owe $185 billion and still be counting. Yet that is the plight of Mexico — sorry the banks — today.

For most, linking the Mexican financial meltdown, the world's biggest debt crisis to date, with the near farcical Mexican army's hunt for Subcommandante Marcos, the guerrilla leader rapidly attaining Che Guevara status, may seem difficult. One is a story of overfed bankers anxiously pacing luxuriously carpeted boardrooms in New York; the other a story of desperate Indians arming themselves to defend their stolen jungle land.

In fact they are directly related. Loans of $50 billion don't come cheap, particularly if you've already borrowed big enough to virtually bankrupt the IMF since your first "liquidity crisis" in 1982. Along with the mortgaging of oil exports to US reserve tanks, a fullscale military onslaught against Marcos and his rebels was part of the price tag. "I see the uprising has boosted the price of the Mexican Indian's blood," Marcos mocked in a sardonic fax to the press from his jungle hideout last week. "Not long ago it was valued at two chickens. Now it is the condition for the most ignominious loan in history."

A Chase Manhattan newsletter produced by the bank's "emerging markets" group in mid-January, just as president Bill Clinton was proposing the loan package, makes it clear that even if the banks aren't pulling President Zedillo's strings, they think they should be for $50 billion. The government "will need to eliminate the Zapatistas to demonstrate their effective control," says the newsletter. As hospitals in Chiapas began to fill with the civilian dead and wounded and all journalists were excluded from the battlezone, last week a bank official mysteriously denied responsibility. The newsletter, he claimed, did "not reflect the opinion of Chase Manhattan".

Marcos — variously voted "the conscience of the nation" and the "sexiest man in Mexico" last year — remains free in a way Mexico can never be again. But the bankers and businessmen are hellbent on revenge. Rather belatedly they've realised that he actually caused the whole crisis in the first place. Mexico's six-yearly economic collapses are in fact political: they happen every time the presidency changes hands.

By launching their rebellion on 1 January 1994 — the beginning of election year and the day the North American Free Trade Agreement between Mexico, Canada and the US came into effect — Marcos and Co managed to provoke a spectacular crisis of confidence. Since the Mexican economic boom has been based on nothing else — 85 percent of all foreign capital inflows go straight on to the stockmarket — it was much easier than taking power by force.

On the home front the Zapatistas exacerbated the ruling PRI party's divisions to the point where the presidential candidate had to be assassinated, and encouraged the government to lose all control of monetary policy in its panicky efforts to buy the electorate with pre-election goodies. Not a bad year's work for a few peasants with nothing more than shotguns.

But no one's stopping there. Yesterday Mexico, tomorrow the world. As the peso's slide finally abated in January, "emerging market" currencies from Brazil to Indonesia started to get the jitters. From Wall Street to London, the whole concept of investment in third world economies is now being questioned.

If Mexico, bizarrely regarded as one of the safer speculative bets until last year, could go into freefall, why not anywhere else? As one guerrilla leader put it with a smile: "We need to think big like the multinationals. There is so much money being pumped into places like Mexico that global markets can mean global crisis just as readily as global profits. Who needs tanks and artillery?"

● "This toad-licking craze is getting way out of hand," Rory Aikens of the Arizona Department of Fish and Game told a bemused news conference in Phoenix. "And people had better understand it's an offence under Arizona state law and we always prosecute."

Asked by reporters to explain why licking the Colorado River toad (*Bufo alvarius*) should be considered an illegal activity, Aikens continued: "The critters can be found all the way from the Mexican border to the Grand Canyon, and in parts of California. Their skin secretes a milky-white substance to deter predators, and that's what these filthy good-for-nothing toad-lickers are after. It's a combination of dimenthyltryptamine and bufotenine, which is classified as a psychoactive drug under Arizona law, and some people are hooked on licking it off the toads, or else drying the stuff and smoking it.

"We had a toad-licker jump off a building last week. He thought he could fly. I went down to the hospital and I asked him 'If you thought you could fly, why didn't you take off from ground level?' They can never answer that one. He's dead now. Kids, say no to toads." *(USA Today, 5/8/94. Spotter — Adam Crawford)*

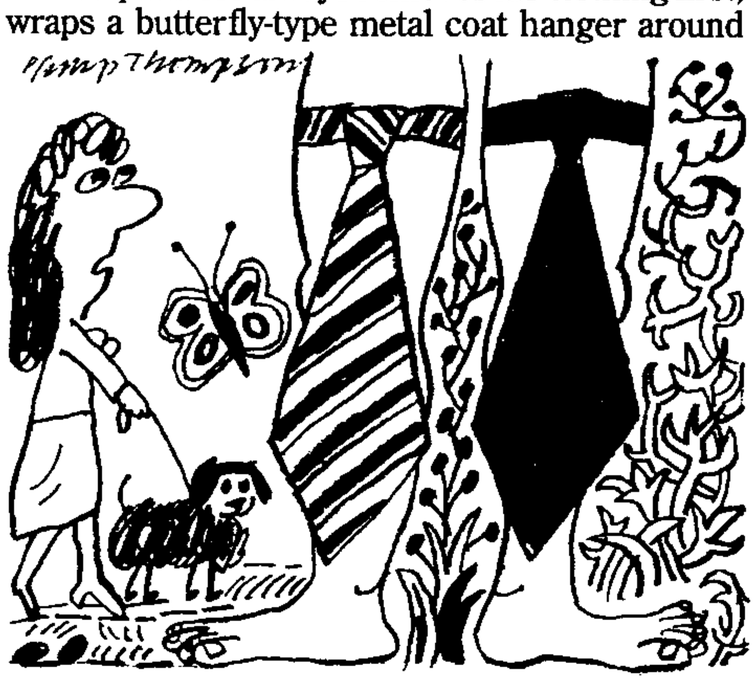
— ● —

● "My client has been getting sexual stimulation by watching women in this way for many years, without previously causing any offence," Adrian Cole told magistrates in a Salisbury court. "Indeed, if his metal coat hanger had not become ensnared in a bramble bush this time, no one would have been inconvenienced in any way."

Mr Cole was defending John Ulicsny, 35, of Estcourt Road, Salisbury, who was in court on a charge of indecent behaviour. "As a teenager, my client was keen on collecting butterflies, but this

FUNNY OLD WORLD

innocent hobby soon led him to start hiding behind hedges, spying on women as they walk along the footpath. He always removes his clothing first, wraps a butterfly-type metal coat hanger around



his waist, and tightens two neck ties round the top of his legs to increase arousal.

"Unfortunately, on this occasion, the hanger snagged on some brambles, and he fell headlong into a bush, covering himself in deep and painful scratches. In extricating himself, he stumbled out in front of a woman walking her dog, panicked when he realised he'd been seen, and tried to hide himself by diving back into the bushes. That was where the police picked him up. He is now receiving psychiatric help, and deserves pity rather than punishment."

Ulicsny was given 12 months' probation. Magistrates ordered the destruction of the ties and the coat hanger. *(Salisbury Journal, 15/12/94. Spotter — Anon)*

Compiled by

Victor Lewis-Smith

— ● —

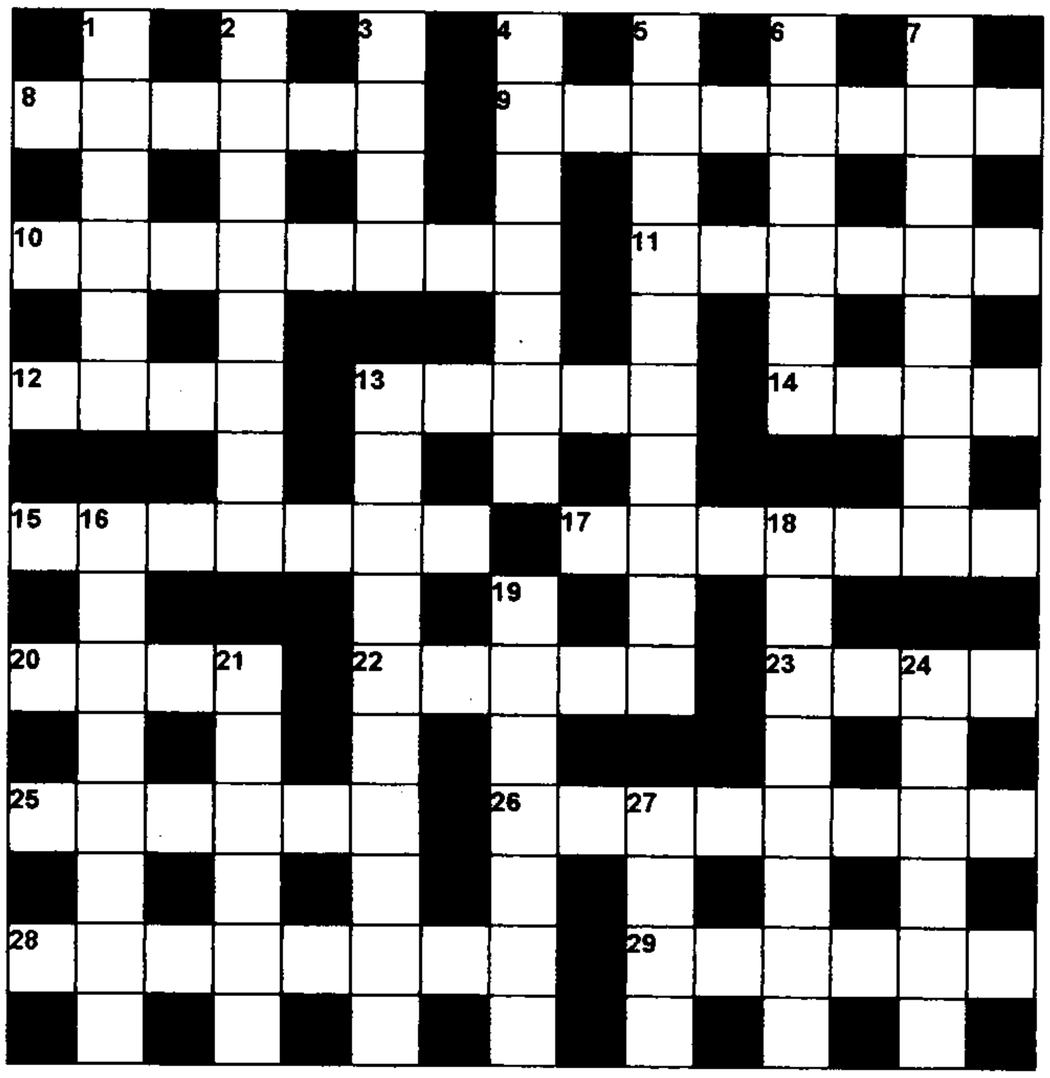
● *"Just because a prostitute disapproves of a client's genital ornamentation, that is no excuse for beating him into unconsciousness with a broom," said Judge Tun Siang, pronouncing sentence in the Kuala Lumpur district court. "An example must be made, and I therefore sentence you to one day's imprisonment."*

Judge Siang had been hearing an assault and theft case, brought against Vasanthy Rahman, a 26-year-old prostitute. The unnamed man who brought the case told the court: "Like many Malaysian men, I have had two small ball bearings inserted into the tip of my penis, to heighten my pleasure. They were implanted many years ago by a Greek doctor who, I discovered recently, was not a doctor at all, but a fish gutter from Portugal. Even so, I have had few complaints.

"On the night in question, I met Miss Rahman on the street and took her to a local hotel, where I gave her M$20. However, when I undressed and she saw my penis with its gleaming, highly polished balls, she screamed, seized a broom, and began clubbing me with it, fracturing my left forearm. This annoyed me, so I reminded her about her promise of total satisfaction and asked for my money back. That must be when she struck me across the skull, and I awoke next morning in a hospital bed. I have still not had a refund. It is disgusting." (Singapore Straits Times, 13/8/94. Spotter — David Clancy)

EYE CROSSWORD 22 by Cyclops

£100 Winner JOHN SINGLETON



ACROSS

8 One serviced by Andy, it's said, on stand by in the Gulf (6)

9 Behaviour of one who's attained majority? Many a minister's behaviour, anyway (8)

10/5 It's not to the benefit of travellers bent on having only part of a Torvill and Dean show (8,7,3)

11 Howe's started inside to bad-mouth party (6)

12 Some piss-artist in the Lords? (4)

13 Swiss ready to kick butt off dictator (5)

14 God-backed '50s political fiasco (4)

15 Transport live heavyweight turkeys a-plenty from this company (7)

17 Conservative is fast moving far to the right (7)

20 Make a disclosure? Camelot? (4)

22 Divert attention: dismiss Di's piece of propaganda (5)

23 Bill's through, they have it (4)

25 William snaps we hear (6)

26 Brenda symbolically is of little value nowadays (3,5)

28 Cobblers toss back hair (8)

29 Relative 'names' in obscure American surroundings (6)

DOWN

1 (see 24)

2 It's Brenda's place to back party with claimed decent sort of majority (8)

3 Education establishment's mark up (4)

4 Graduate, decent and upright, but he was no Cambridge blue! (7)

5 (see 10)

6 Unlikely true American gives a person a start in life (6)

7 Clangers Left dropped, swamping disintegrating USSR with capital (8)

13 Support for ministerial arses? (5,5)

16 Responsible for spilt tear about Hick starting but failing to complete century? (8)

18 Tory gaffer? Presently, yes! (8)

19 Sexual imaginings of Ms Weldon involving part of bible and a pole (7)

21 Westminster's initial view of fiddle (6)

24/1 Bonkbuster perpetrator in fancy ICI underwear (6,6)

27 Unfashionable fellows responsible for 24/1's downfall (4)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 03.03.95. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 21

ACROSS: 8 Eurotrain 9 (See 27) 10/24 Early day motion 11 Israel 12 (See 23) 13 Mogadishu 16 Porsche 18 Pollute 20 Eye Escape 21 Queen 24 (See 10) 26 Royalist 27/9 Bill Cash 28 Reshuffle.

DOWN 1 Defamatory 2 Frolic 3 Study 4 Baby Doc 5 Indicator 6 Scargill 7 Isle 14 Hattersley 15 Chicanery 17 Specials 19 Oppress 22 Uplift 23/12 Cyrus Vance 25 Obit.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

24 FEBRUARY 1995

Insight Probe Exclusive: We name the guilty KGB men

THE Sunday Times has discovered exclusively that Russian spy O'Legover is writing a new book. We have therefore bought it and are proud to publish it without worrying if any of it is true.

Now we can reveal that in the 1960s the KGB managed to infiltrate the top echelons of the British Labour Party, making it in effect a de facto satellite of the Soviet Union.

For the first time, we can uncover the top names recruited by the lure of Moscow gold. They included:

Sid Nargs. Brilliant influential assistant general secretary of ASLAN, the national union of zookeepers. Codenamed "Nargs", this key figure once had lunch with a Russian man in the Gay Hussar.

by Our Spy Staff
Oleg O'Legover (as told to David Lepardon-me-I've-got-it-wrong-again)

Nargs

Boggis

Trevor-Soper

Spy

Eddie Boggis, MP for Stepney East. Leading thinker, statesman and unknown back-bencher Boggis's KGB file (marked WHO IS THIS?) reveals that he once went on holiday to a Black Sea resort with his wife Elsie where he met several Russians.

Lord Trevor-Soper. Crusading bishop and hugely important voice in left-wing ecclesiastical circles. Was known to have met Svetlana Stalin, daughter of the hated Russian dictator, at a book launch of a volume of essays criticising her father *(shurely shome mishtake? Ed)*.

Stephen Spy *(shurely 'Fry'? Ed)*. **Senior member of Labour's media establishment, Fry was only two years old at the time but was already earmarked by the '60s KGB as a potential "agent" in the mould of Burgess and Maclean.** *(That's enough non-agents. Ed.)*

ON OTHER PAGES

Gordievski took Murdoch Gold. 'My shame' by spy.

Pages 2, 3, 12, 17, 19.

Lilley asked embarrassing question on TV show

by Our Media Staff **Janet Street-Portillo**

THERE WAS outrage yesterday when a man in the audience of a live political show asked the social security Minister "a disgraceful question".

The man, wearing glasses and a beard, asked Mr Lilley whether he and "another right-wing member of the Cabinet" had been getting together in an attempt to "screw Mr Major".

TV interviewer Jonathan Dimbleby quickly stepped in and told the questioner to grow up. "We want sensible personal questions on this show," he said, "not stupid political ones."

Viewers were stunned by the LWT show and jammed the switchboard. Said one complainant: "If I wanted to see intrusive questions about people's sex lives I would watch Jonathan Dimbleby interviewing Prince Charles."

Robbie Burns' Traditional Lament on the Death of Sir Nicholas Fairbairn MP

Gang awa' wi ye,
Ya cream-faced loon.
Wi yer tartan trews
And yer boozy breath.

Wi yer hands
A-wanderin' o'er the wee
young lassies.
They'll no be saddened
By yer untimely death.

© Rabbie Lionel Burns

"He's Russian Orthodox"

The evening consists of a slide show presentation explaining the history of Nynex, raffle prizes and we will be happy to answer any queers you may have on the Information Super Highway.

NYNEX CableComms Solent Limited

A Taxi Driver writes

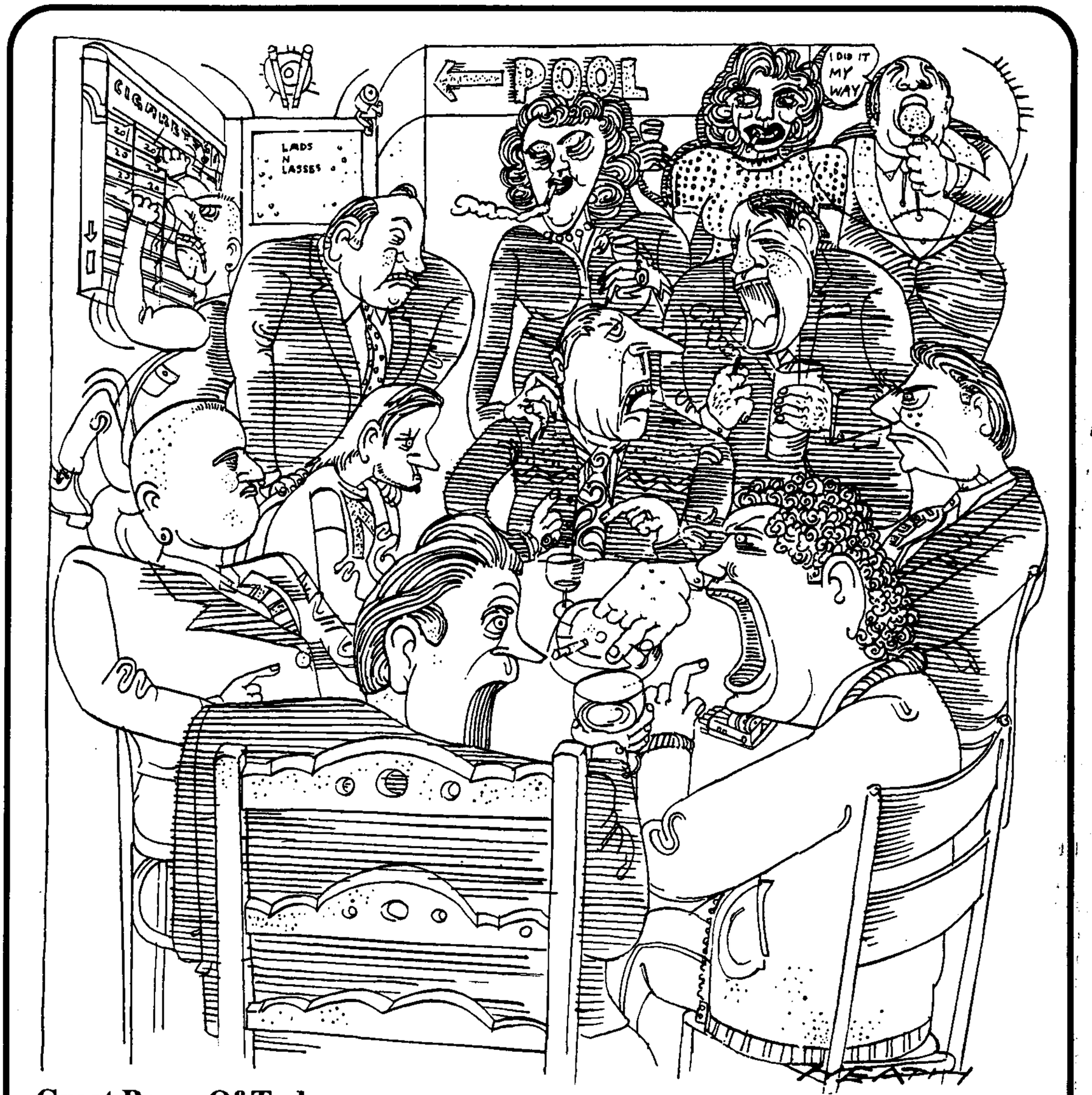
For the first time ever, an Irish cab driver is invited to comment on an issue of topical importance.

This week: **Seamus O'Littlejohn** (Cab No. 3).

See those English yobboes? They're all the same, the English. All they want is the drinkin' and the fightin'. Always been the same. Lazy, good-for-nothing boyos, just lookin' for trouble. There'll never be any solution to the English problem, I'm tellin' you. I'd stop them comin' over here. They should cut the island of Britain adrift and let it float out into the Atlantic. It's the only language these English understand. I had that Henry Kelly in the back of the cab once. A proper English gentleman he was, and no mistake.

NEXT WEEK: Seamus Heaney (Cab No. 7) on Post-Wildean Irony.

GIELGUD 494 5065/344 4444
THE PETER HALL COMPANY
in Noel Coward's
HAMLET
"AN UNFORGETTABLE EVENT..."
The Times



Great Bores Of Today.

"... if ever there was a fix this was it did you see it? I was round at my brother-in-law's he's got Sky I was just opening a can of lager in the kitchen and when I went back in it was all over he was lying on the floor and Bruno was walking around telling everyone he was going to be the new world champion it's got to be a joke hasn't it? it's the same old story he's never had a fight with anyone worth talking about except Tyson and he murdered him you see the way it works is you need to get a couple of preliminaries under your belt in this case it's the WBA or it might be the IBM or even the BMW and then you get a crack at the world title but in Bruno's case they just get stiffs for him to knock down we've seen it all before just take Eubank he's typical and the Asian boy what's he called? Prince someone? course when Frank gets up against real opposition they'll knock his head off he should stick to panto we saw him in *Aladdin* at Richmond and he was brilliant he kept saying 'oh yes he is Harry' my sister's little boy Kevin loves him and at least he's English no he's good entertainment so what if it's fixed? who cares...?"

Celeb

LIGGER

AS FAR AS THE MEDIA'S CONCERNED MY BODY IS NOW A TEMPLE... AFTER YEARS OF ABUSE THIS REFORMED OLD ROCKER HAS NEVER BEEN FITTER OR HEALTHIER, RIGHT?
OF COURSE, SIR.
I MEAN IF THE PRESS FOUND OUT HOW WRECKED I WAS GETTING, MY REPUTATION WOULD BE SERIOUSLY DAMAGED...
I UNDERSTAND, SIR...
SO NOT A WORD TO ANYONE ABOUT ME POPPING THESE PILLS EVERY DAY OR THE BIG FAT JOINTS I HAVE NOW AND THEN, OKAY?
DON'T WORRY, MR BLOKE.
YOUR SECRET ARTHRITIS PROBLEM IS SAFE WITH ME
THE SAME GOES FOR MY REAL AGE AS WELL..
PILL

The Secret DIARY OF JOHN MAJOR aged 47¾

Monday

I was not inconsiderably sorry to see all the news placards this morning. They all had in very big letters "NEW TORY SEX SCANDAL". "Oh dear," I said to Mr Hanley "Who is it this time?" "I am afraid it is you, Prime Minister," he replied, with a smile. He then read out an article in the Daily Mail which had the headline "It was Ovaltine and Love Romps At Number 21". Apparently a long time ago I had a girl friend who has now told all the newspapers about me. However, I do not have to resign because I was not married at the time, unlike Mr Mellor, Mr Yeo and all the others.

Tuesday

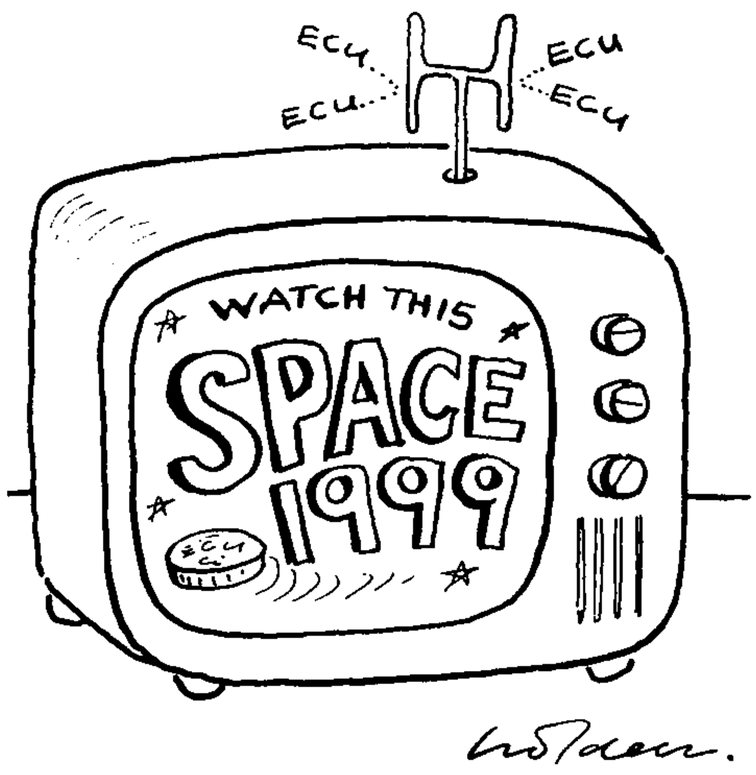
My wife Norman is not talking to me. She has bee reading the Daily Mail. "I am not talking to you," she said. "You only married me apparently because you wanted to be prime minister." "Aha!" I said, in the voice I use when I am catching out Mr Blair at Question Time. "So you *are* talking to me." At this she went off in a huff. No wonder I became prime minister! Then the telephone rang. It was my brother Terry. "If it is about your appearance at the Oldie lunch with Mr Wogan and Mr Milligan, I am not at all interested," I said. "I have not even read about it in all the newspapers." "No," said Terry, "it's about your affair with that lady from across the road who Mum didn't like. The papers have been ringing me up, but I have told them there was not a word of truth in it. You only played Scrabble together and listened to Round the Horne." "You have got it wrong again, Terry," I said. "Just like you did in your book when you said on page 124 that I painted all the gnomes with red hats when father had asked for blue ones. You know perfectly well that Mr Webster ordered the red ones and then changed his mind." "There is no need to take that tone with me," said Terry, "just because you think that you're important. If you want to be personal, let me tell you that I have been on television more times than you this week. And, what is more, I could easily have put in my book about the time you came back home late from Mrs Kieran's once, with your pullover on back to front and your hair all messy." "I did not do anything that night," I told him very angrily. "I had only taken my jersey off because Mrs Kierans had put both bars of her fire on and it was very hot." "Alright then," said Terry, "explain the time when you told Mum you were going off to play cricket and never came home. She had to go out looking for you in the street, shouting 'John, John, your tea's getting cold.' " In my judgement, I had had enough of this silly conversation and I slammed down the phone just like Mr Paisley does to me.

Wednesday

Today Mr Hanley came in looking very glum. "Another one down," he said. "I have not got time to help you with your crossword," I told him. "I have got a not inconsiderable crisis over Europe to sort out." "No, prime minister," said Mr Hanley. "I meant another of your ministers has resigned." "Oh dear," I said. "Not more sex scandals? This is the last thing we want." "No," said Mr Hanley, "nothing like that this time. Mr Wardle has resigned on a matter of principle." "Phew!" I said. "That's all right then."

Thursday

What is not all right is all my Cabinet, who are still giving interviews about the Common European Currency. Every time you turn on the television, there are Mr Hurd, Mr Redwood or Mr Clarke giving completely different views. I will not stand for this, as I told the Cabinet at a special emergency meeting I called to tell them I would not stand for it. "Well, what is our line, Prime Minister?" asked Mr Portfolio, with a cleverdick little grin on his face. "I have made our line crystal clear," I told him. "We do not have a line at the moment, because it would be quite wrong. But I cannot rule out the possibility of having one sometime in the future, when the time is right." At this there was a long silence, while they all thought how cleverly I had evaded the Euro-crisis. Then Mr Portfolio asked: "Should we send Waldegrave out for some chips — and you could show us all what your policy is with regard to putting vinegar on them?" I had no idea what this was about, but Mr Gummer giggled and said he was "a salt-first man".



Friday

This is the third day Norman has not spoken to me, although when it

was time for our tea in front of *The Private Life of Plants*, which is her favourite programme after *Casualty* she broke her silence. "At least the plants keep their lives private," she said, throwing a bag of chips at me. "There's your tea, just like you and your old flame used to like them!" she spat. I had just finished picking up the chips when the phone rang. It was my brother Terry. "I'm in the radio car, John," he said, "at Radio Talk Chigwell, doing a phone-in on the great Chips Issue. but I can't remember how you did it? Was it salt first and then vinegar, or the other way?" "I am very busy," I told him. "I have not got time to discuss chips with you". "That's OK, John," he said, "I've just given all the listeners your private number, so you can tell them yourself."

Saturday

The Cabinet have taken my instructions to heart. Today there have been no speeches on Europe by Ministers. There have only been speeches by my ex-friend Norma Lamont, my ex-friend Mr Baker and my very-ex-friend Lord Howe. They are however of no importance and no one except the newspapers and television took any notice of them.

Sunday

It is in no small measure annoying the way the media continue to pretend that the Cabinet is split over Europe. I told a reporter today that he should in my judgement ask me questions about important subjects — like the common currency.

Mr Clarke is beginning to not be my friend anymore. He keeps saying that as Chancellor he is "his own man". This is clearly untrue as I am the one who is his own man — i.e. mine, not his.

I told Norma not to invite him round for drinks and furthermore to ring him up and tell him that he was not invited. Mr Clarke said he could not come anyway because he was preparing a big speech on how good it would be to have the ecu.

"If this carries on," I said to Norman, "one of us will have to go."

"Shall I start packing, dear?" she asked, which was rather odd since we have no plans to go on holiday.

HOW THEY ARE RELATED

(yet giving each other more space)

Sir Robert Geldof KBE

Ms Paula Yates

Cuchullain The Unwashed
(King of Tyrone 863-902)

Brendan O'Globgh

Robert the Fokker

Marshal O'Fock

Dr Hastings Bandaid

St Robert of Geldof

W.B. Yates

Rev. Jess Yates

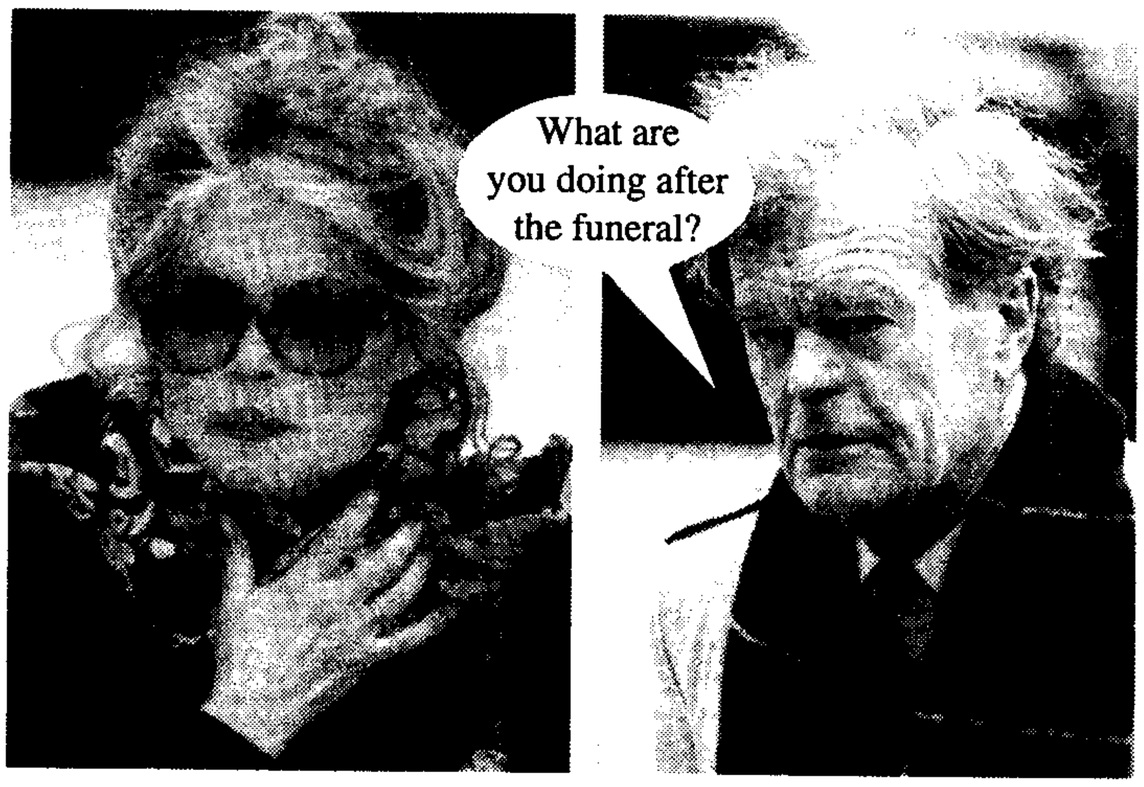
Rev. Jesse Jackson

Rev. Jessye Norman

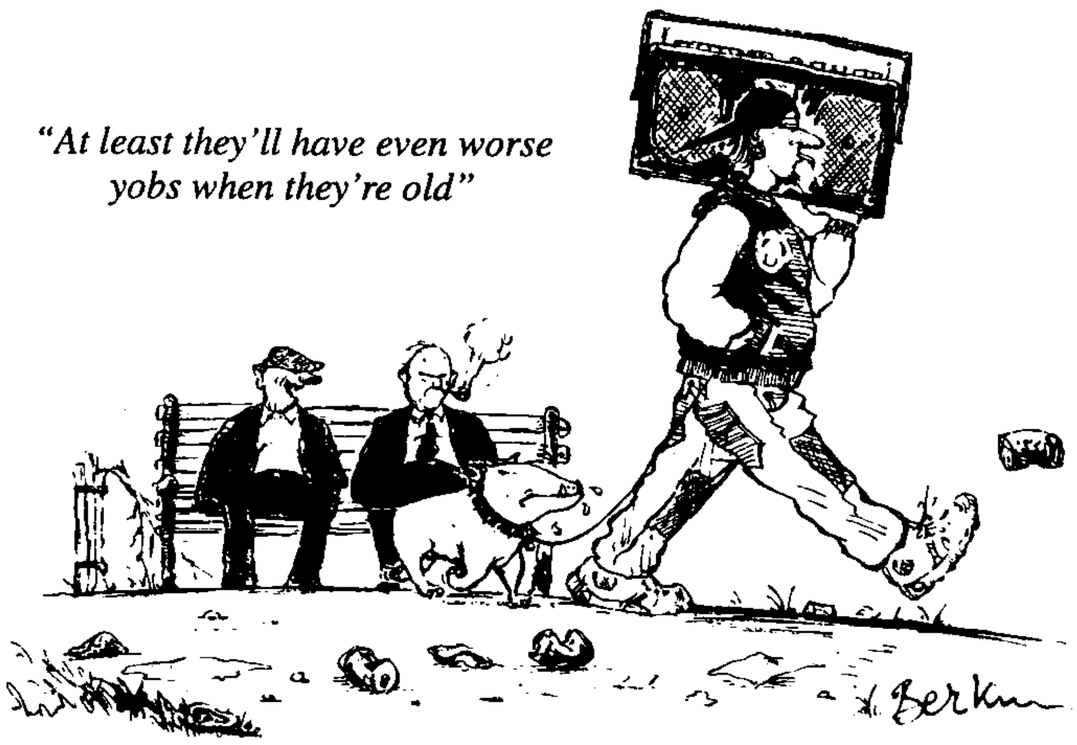
Paula Robeson

Paula Yates
(Britain's first woman in space)

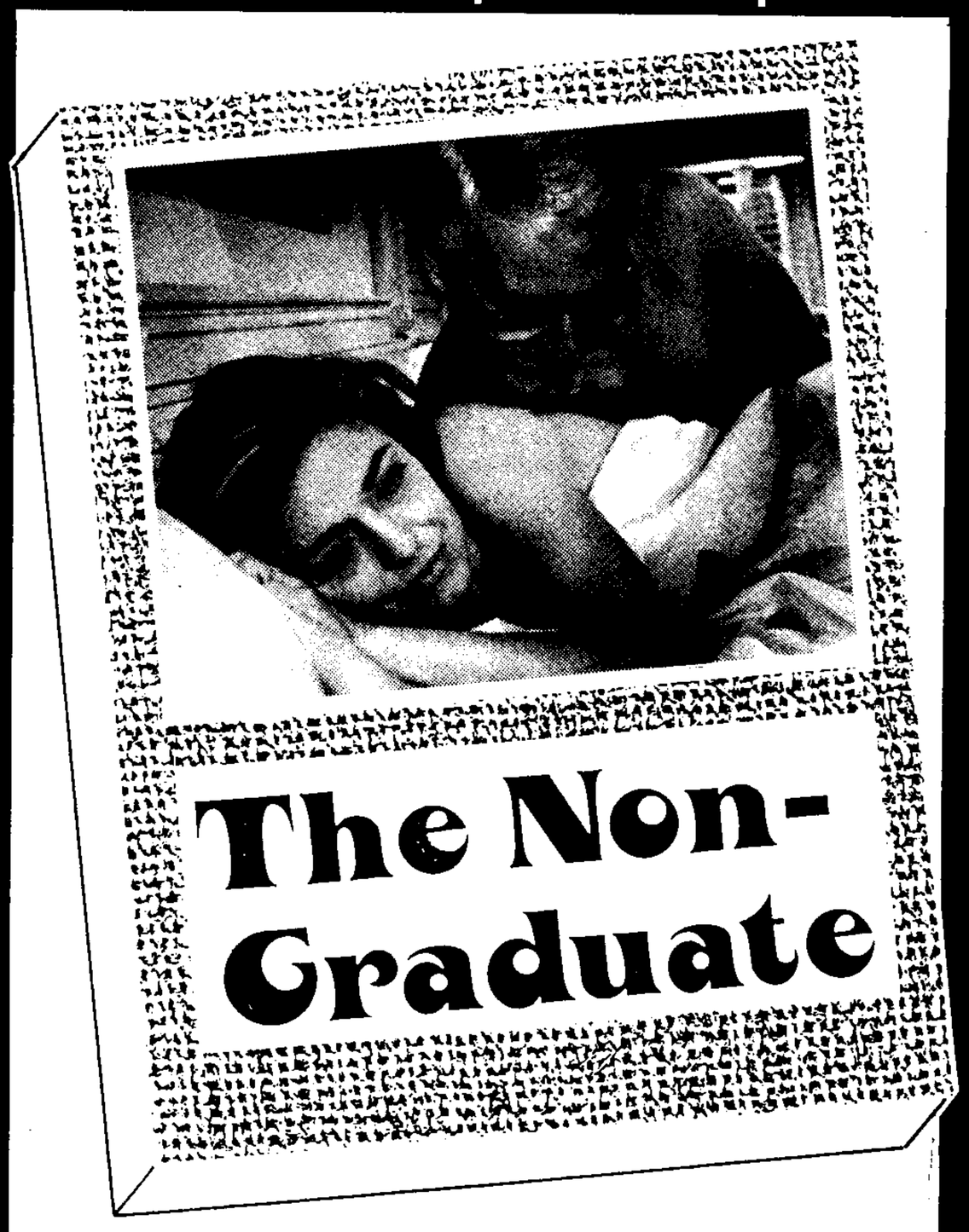
THE DAILY TELEGRAPH



Ageing beauty and red-blooded vegetarian mourn young champion of animal rights



Classic Videos from the Fifties



LEGENDARY romantic comedy charting the 'rites of passage' of a shy young non-graduate about to embark on a career in cement garden-gnome manufacture.

When he meets Mrs Kierans, the experienced, alluring older woman from across the road, his whole world is turned upside down. The sexy divorcée initiates the amazed young John into all the delights of love in the afternoon — and in return John teaches her how to eat fish and chips out of a newspaper.

But John's mother does not approve. When they go on holiday to the Costa Brava, she insists on coming too — and sleeping between them in the bed.

It's no wonder poor John went mad and became prime minister.

Watch out for the classic scene where Mrs Robinson *(shurely 'Kierans'? Ed)* takes off her Winceyette nightie to the strains of John's favourite song, *Bridge Over Troubled Waterloo Station*. But John says: "No thank you, Mrs Kierans. In my judgement any hanky-panky might not inconsiderably damage my political career."

Cast in Full

JOHN MAJOR	. . . . .	Norman Wisdom
MRS KIERANS	. . . . .	Anne Bancroft
MRS MAJOR	. . . . .	Irene Handl
TERRY MAJOR-BALL	. . . . .	Eric Morecambe
NORMA JOHNSON	. . . . .	Julie Andrews
MAN IN PUB	. . . . .	Terry-Thomas

Directed by Bryan Forbes

The Alternative Rocky Horror Service Book

No. 94. Service For The Rehabilitation of An Homosexual Playwright

The Dean *(for it is she)*: Brothers and sisters and celebrities. We are gathered here, under the eyes of the television cameras, to give thanks for the incomparable genius that was N— or M—. (Here he may say 'the divine Oscar', 'Noel' or 'Stephen Fry' when he goes.) There is only one thing worse than coming to Church.

All: And that is not coming to Church.

(Here the congregation may laugh)

Dean: No one speaks badly of Poets' Corner.

All: Only those that cannot get into it do that.

(Here the congregation may roll in the aisles)

The Dean: Oscar is to be commemorated in a window.

All: A *window*?

Dean: And where is this window to be placed?

All: In the south transept.

Dean: Ah, the unfashionable side!

There shall then be a reading from N— or M— (here the Dean may introduce some leading thespian, such as Dame Judi Dench or Sir Ian McKellen).

Celeb: The reading is taken from the Holy Bible.

All: One should always have something sensational to read in church.

(Here various elderly actors may have to be resuscitated following an attack of hysterical amusement)

Celeb: *The Book of Oscar* Chapter One.

1. And, lo, there was one whose name was Oscar, who spake in paradox.

2. But he was betrayed by his friend, which was called Bo-sey.

3. And he was crucified by the British Establishment.

4. And they took him to the place which is called Reading. And there he was cast into outer darkness.

5. But after a hundred years had passed he rose again, and was put into a window. Here endeth the Reading Gaol.

All: That's very good. We wish we'd thought of that.

Dean: You will, brethren, you will. After the final hymn, you are all invited to the Café Royal for lukewarm champagne and stale crisps.

All: Ah, so we will be the unspeakable in pursuit of the uneatable!

Hymn: *He's Got The Whole World In His Handbag* (Words: St Matthew Parris. Tune: Mary Wesley).

© Carey & Sharey Productions 1995.

New Owner for Private Eye?

That Owen Oyston/Ian Hislop Breakfast That Never Took Place in full

Porn Cocktail

or

Rapefruit Segments

or

Pop Tarts

— ❋ —

Jailbait

or

Lancashire Hot Stuff, with Radio Piccadilly Sauce

— ❋ —

Sex Whitstable Oysters, filled with Sewage
(WARNING: NOT TO BE EATEN)

— ❋ —

Rolls With Honeys

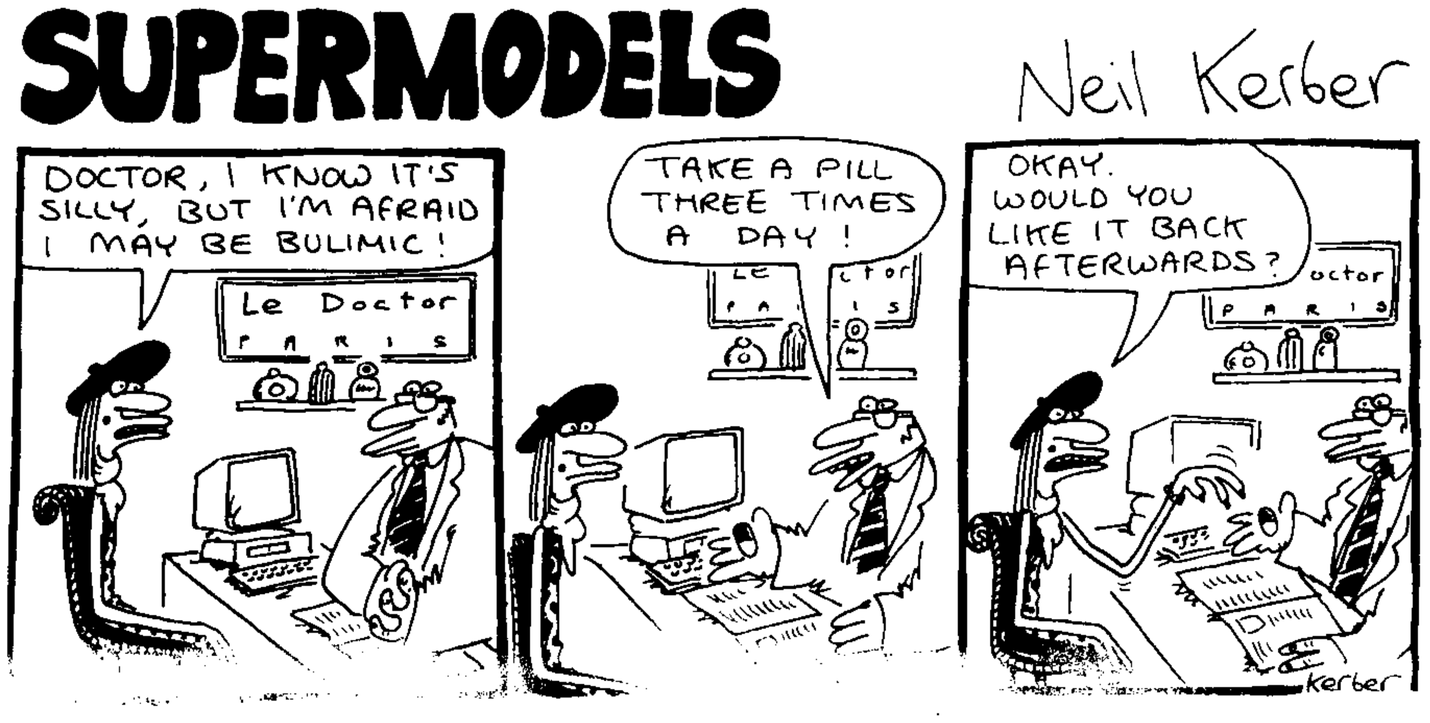
(That's enough filth. Ed.)

Yes! It's Three Generations of Hogg Rhyming Slang!

Sarah Hogg	**More boring than Rees-Mogg**
Quintin Hogg	**More senile than Rees-Mogg**
Lord Boyd-Carpenter	**Doesn't rhyme with Rees-Mogg**

SUPERMODELS

Neil Kerber


DOCTOR, I KNOW IT'S SILLY, BUT I'M AFRAID I MAY BE BULIMIC!
Le Doctor PARIS
TAKE A PILL THREE TIMES A DAY!
OKAY. WOULD YOU LIKE IT BACK AFTERWARDS?
kerber

LESBIAN activists invaded the Sunday Times offices in London yesterday and chained themselves to desks.

They were protesting at the paper's portrayal of a lesbian group as a militant anti-male army.

Mail on Sunday

Donna Van Den Berghen, after she told a tribunal that her boss ate a chocolate-covered penis at a Christmas lunch, chased her around the room, touched her breasts, and gave her a bear hug.

The Grauniad

BBC PROGRAMME REVIEW 'FAILS THE PUBLIC'

by Our Media Staff
Jane Thynne-News-Day

THE long-awaited BBC Programme Review appeared yesterday and was immediately slammed as being "elitist, out of touch, and of no interest to most of the population".

The report, written in English in London by middle-class graduates, appeals to "just three people", claimed one critic last night.

"Only John Birt, Liz Forgan and Alan Yentob like this sort of ing. And they are all middle-aged over-educated white media liberals."

Another critic attacked the Programme Review, complaining that "its tone is relentlessly highbrow, using grammar, punctuation and upmarket spelling. It even has some words of more than one syllable i.e. programme and review."

The critic continued: "It's this sort of thing that alienates the vast majority of people in this country. The BBC are just superserving one tiny sector of the country — i.e. a guilt-ridden dinner party in Islington."

The BBC are now considering a very expensive report to review the programme review.

"We are going to ask the public whether they think it is a waste of time asking them stupid questions instead of doing our job which is to put on decent programmes."

'Elitist' programmes to go in Birt's £2 billion BBC shake-up

IN THE most radical shake-up of the BBC since last year, Director-General John Birt has decided to implement his £100 million Programme Review.

Out go such elitist BBC programmes as:

- **EastEnders**
- **The National Lottery Show**
- **Noel's House Party**
- **Match of the Day**
- **Neighbours**
- **EastEnders Omnibus**

In come a whole new range of programmes specially designed to appeal to the majority of people in Britain, i.e. all the minorities.

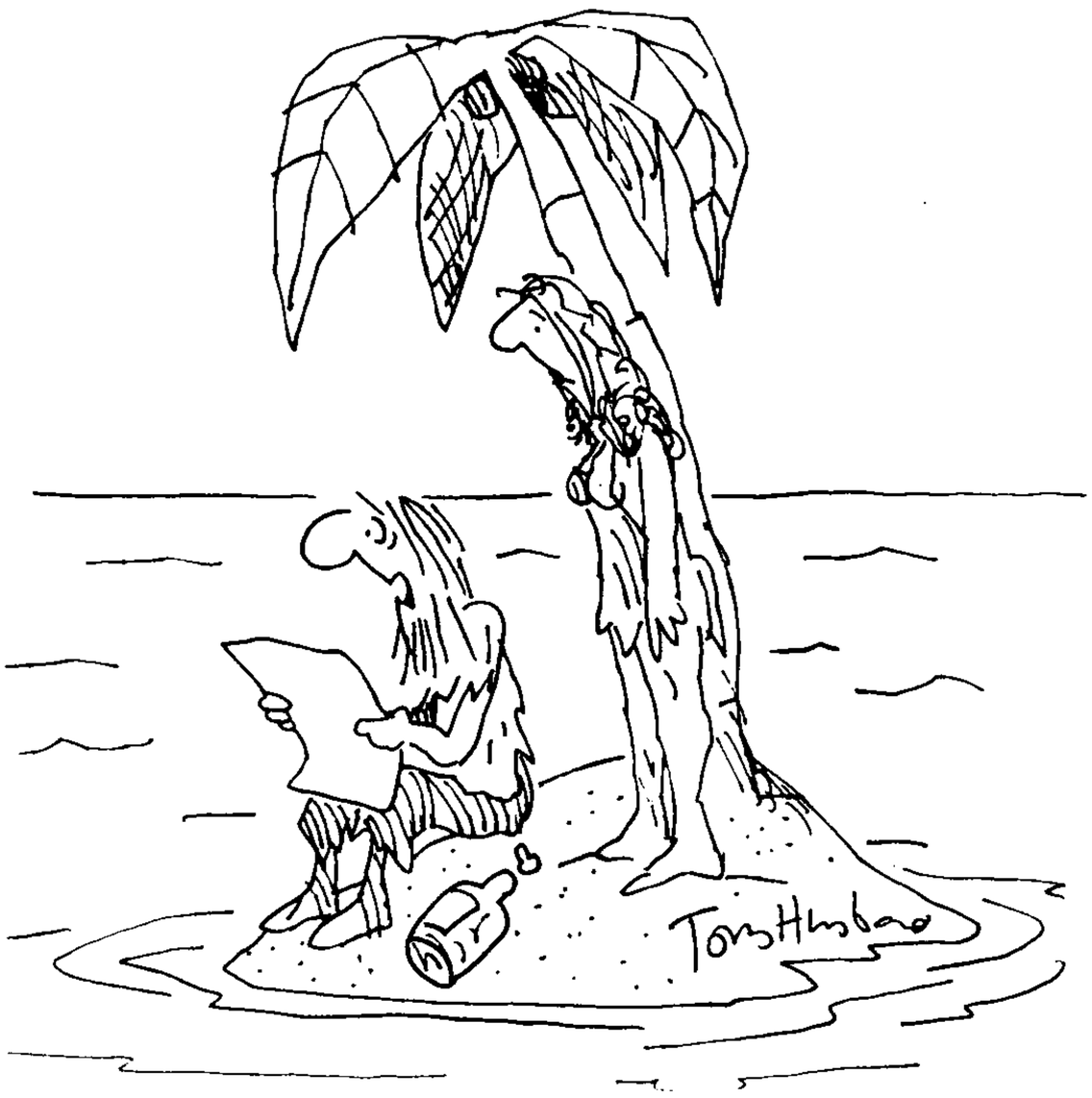
- **Inspector Hatterjee Investigates**
- **Leroy's House Party**
- **Highlights of the Chinese Women's Football League**
- **Biro Collecting Today, with Christos Christodoulos and Ranjat Panjay.**
- **The Not Getting Up Show — a youth special targeted at the 14-17 year-olds who don't want to get out of bed, even to watch television.**
- **The Private Life of Toast, a 14-part series for Britain's toast-loving minority, with Cliff Michelmore amd Mbutu Onanugu.**
- **Plus more programmes for East Anglians, Red Indians, Red Ken, High Street Ken, grapefruit segments and others.** *(Viewers switch over to ITV as usual.)*

Islamic Baywatch

Who do YOU want to present the BBC News and Current Affairs?

No	YES
Jeremy Paxman	Jeremy Beadle
Richard Baker	Danny Baker
Sue Cameron	Su Pollard
Jim Naughtie	Jimmy Greaves
John Humphries	John Inman (Mr Humphries from *Are You Being Served?*)

(That's enough — Ed.)



"It's a letter saying they're going to build a motorway through here"

'HOOLIGANS TO BLAME' says no-one

by Our Football Staff **Gazza Yob**

THE outbreak of crowd violence that halted the England-Ireland football match was entirely the fault of everyone else, according to experts writing in the newspapers at great length this week.

They all made it clear that the blame for the riot, which was widely condemned by politicians in both countries, must be laid squarely at the door of the ticket touts, the England supporters travel organisation, the Irish Gardai, the Irish F.A., the English F.A. and many others too numerous to mention.

Said one leading football-ologist:

"They should have stopped it. They are the ones who are responsible. I'm not sure who they are but they are certainly not the hooligans."

DRESDEN BLITZED BY MASS APOLOGIES

by Our Wartime Staff **Sir Osbert Lancaster-Bomber-Harris**

THE HISTORIC city of Dresden today vanished beneath an unprecedented barrage of apologies, delivered by an armada of English clergymen and members of the Royal Family.

The sky was black with Lufthansa planes flying in over the ruined Saxon capital, packed with bishops and senior servicemen eager to say "it was all our fault".

Said wartime historian Max Hitler *(contd p. 94)*

In Today's Daily Pornograph

Quentin Letch on how brilliant older birds are in bed 25 ■ Leader: Whither the clitoral orgasm 22 ■ Porn for Women — Does it sell newspapers? asks Hugh Montgomery-Massivebonk 23 ■ W.F. Deedes in Ethiopia 7 *(shurely shome mishtake?)*

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'SHOCK JOCKS' TAKE OVER MEDIA

by Our Talk Radio Staff
Peter Fiddiculous

YES, they're here. They're loud-mouthed, they're controversial, they're Scottish! And they are shockingly bad! They'll say anything to get publicity and they know that the more right-wing they are the better! But make no mistake, they are the future and they are here to stay!

Names like Andrew Neil, Peter McLie, John Junor, A.A. Gill *(That's enough. Ed.)*

Poetry Corner

In Memoriam: U Nu, former Prime Minister of Burma

So. Farewell then
U Nu.

Who were you?
No one knows.

But
U Nu!

Geddit?

E.J. Thribb (17½)

The RAF — Then and Now

1945

'Bomber' Harris

1995

Sir Sandy Wilson

DIARY

Ken: My wife Barbara and myself have come in for a lot of stick on account of our Socialist beliefs. I've seen it all before, mate. First, the Tolpuddle Martyrs, then the Suffragettes, and now the Folletts.

So what's wrong about being wealthy and socialist? The ordinary working people of this country are begging for successful role-models. The decent little Labour voter working in his factory looks at me in his copy of *Hello!* magazine come teabreak and says to his mates: "You know, mates, I admire that Ken Follett for managing to run his own Bentley and divide his valuable time between a two-million-pound house in Cheyne Walk and a luxury villa on the Cote d'Azur. This great movement of ours needs more blokes like that - celebrities we can really look up to." And you know what? I'm not going to let that worker down by ditching my Bentley, as some have suggested. I'm not that callous, not by a long chalk.

Barbara: Absolutely. Of course, the establishment in this country is running scared. From their Chelsea houses, from their sun-soaked holiday villas and from the back seats of their swanky chauffeur-driven limousines, they'll persecute us in every way they can. But this will never, I repeat NOT, deflect us from our aim at Emily's List UK, which is all about achieving fifty per cent of British MPs in lipstick by the year 2010.

As an economic historian with a post-graduate degree in Sums from the LSE, I know only too well how the early Suffragettes suffered for their beliefs, hence their name. And Ken and I suffer too, even as we get to Jamaica to lend the natives and their servants our support. And so next month Emily's List UK is paying tribute to the suffering endured by those suffragettes at a splendid dinner-dance in the executive ballroom of the Park Lane Hotel. The centrepiece, a delicious chocolate gateau, consists of a re-creation in sponge and icing sugar of Emily Davison throwing herself to a tragic death under the King's horse at the Derby in 1915, with scrumptious home-made strawberry jam flowing from the marzipan figure of poor Emily. At £500 a throw, we'll be earning valuable money for the Labour Movement, after the orchestra, hotel, caters and assorted "little people" have been paid off. As Steve Biko once said to me: "We can never hope to achieve a lasting political solution without a first-rate dinner-dance. Enjoy!"

Ken: Neil, John. And now Tony. Fine blokes, smashing leaders, great mates. Tony's a smashing bloke. Smashing. And a great mixer at parties. In the past, some Labour politicians who

BARBARA AND KEN FOLLETT

will remain nameless seemed uncomfortable — chippy, you might say — in the houses of those wealthier and more successful that themselves, but Tony really knows how to behave. Lovely bloke. I was saying to him only the other day, "Tony", I was saying, "Tony". And eventually he said, "What?" And I said, "Just Tony". And he understood.

Toe. Knee. (bl) Hair. I suppose it's the world-wide bestselling author translated into twenty-five languages in me, but I've often thought that that name just about sums up the guy. We've all got toes, and we've all got knees, and we've all got (bl)hair, and he's determined to bring out all that's best in our common humanity, not just for us celebrities, but for everyone who likes celebrities too. And between those four walls, Barbara and myself are very close to Tony and Cherie, very close indeed. They love coming to parties at our £2 million Cheyne Walk house. But I do hope that the Press leave them alone when they make a totally private visit to our next star-studded party at an undisclosed date on the 28th of this month, photocall around 8.15, Tony's is the blue Rover.

Barbara: This "champagne socialism" tag is such a ridiculous way for the establishment to attempt to destroy us, and, by destroying us, destroy socialism in this country by preventing my selection for a safe seat. Above all, I'm a socialist because I worry, by God I worry, about the kind of country my children and grandchildren will grow up in. I want them to grow up happy and fulfilled in Cheyne Walk, like their father and grandfather before them, and I believe that a Labour government will benefit all of us who have achieved something in our lives, and are prepared to enjoy the benefits of hard work without the burden of extra tax. It was Martin Luther King who once said to me: "Barbara, our great movement will not have triumphed until the workers receive proper training in the pouring of champagne."

I make no bones about the way Parliament needs more people like me, more feminists married to successful men, feminists who are prepared to wear shoulder-pads and lipstick and be driven around their prospective working-class constituencies for up to a week to meet and even talk to the voters. Frankly, this country is crying out for a change, and personally I will not rest until I have it. And I know, I just *know*, that a change is going to come. In fact, I'll be able to fit one in before dinner. The little tartan two-piece, perhaps, or maybe the green trouser suit with the crimson cuffs — Tony's favourite!

Ken: First and foremost I'm a writer. Words is my first love. Don't talk to me about the Booker though, or you'll hear my hackles rise while I throw a wobbly. Frankly, there's a lot of snobbery in the so-called literary world. Every year, they award the Booker to yet another wordy book: words, words and more words, just great blocks words, often by someone you've never even seen on telly. I've nothing against Anita Brookner, but when was the last time she wrote a book with a Panzer division mowing down an entire village and brutally raping a buxom maiden before themselves being wiped out by a five-man commando unit with high-velocity sub-machine-guns?

Barbara: As a trained economic and political scientist with a diploma in fancy knitwear, may I make one final plea? With literally tens of people unemployed, isn't it time we had a few more women in Parliament? Male politicians are obsessed with scoring points off each other. Women, on the other hand, go into politics as a vocation and really do want to find solutions in a gentle, caring, conciliatory way. Look at Barbara Castle. Look at Margaret Thatcher. Look at Virginia Bottomley. Look at Teresa Gorman. All great women, and all great socialists, except for the ones who are Conservatives and Barbara Castle, who never bothered to visit her image consultant, and consequently never became Prime Minister. I think it was Mahatma Ghandi who once said to me, Barbara, you've got to colour-co-ordinate if you want to get on in politics. And that's why I wear a particularly *caring* shade of lipstick — so that socialism might flourish once more in this desperately divided and over-taxed land.

"Apparently, Jones, you are the only member of your department not suffering from a stress-related illness. Why not?"

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6:05 Gladiators.* *387045*
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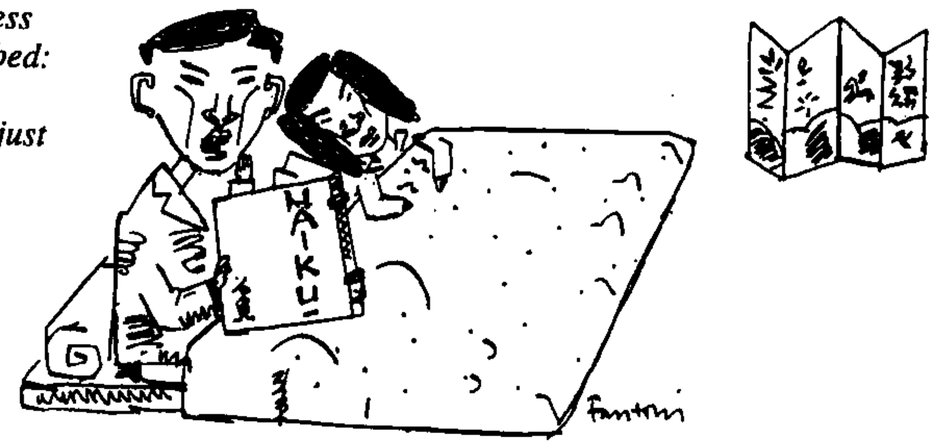
Scotsman

Literary Review

Slick character in search of an author...



"It's hopeless reading in bed: after two syllables, I just fall asleep"

Tony Blair: The Moderniser
Tony Sopel
(Michael Joseph, £15.99)

SHORTLY after Tony Blair cantered to victory in last year's Labour leadership election, the *Independent on Sunday* thought to run a profile. Among other aspects, it would concentrate on Blair's hitherto unexplored early life, in particular his time at school and university.

The *Sindy* hacks ran into problems. No educational institute attended by Blair would release details on him. In desperation, the *Sindy* was reduced to ringing up people who happened have been at St John's College, Oxford, many years after Blair had left to see if they had any ideas. In the end, with deadlines looming, somebody turned up an Oxford don who had been an exact contemporary: he hadn't known the future Labour leader well, but he did remember that he had long hair. These observations, reproduced almost word for word, formed the bulk of the *Sindy* chronicle of Blair's Oxford years.

This sort of thing is symptomatic of the difficulties involved in penning instant political biographies — especially if the subject is under 50 and comes from nowhere (an exception is Robert Harris's well-researched 1984 book on Neil Kinnock). As even the most casual student of the 90s political scene can tell you, there are only two questions of interest surrounding Tony Blair: how he got into parliament (more or less by accident); and how he secured the leadership (the usual backstairs stitch-up). Both these aspects have already been painstakingly covered by the serious newspapers.

As for the rest of Jon Sopel's book, well, one might as well canvass Madonna's views on celibacy. No dirt. A blameless undergraduate career of non-inhalation and moderate application whose single excess involved fronting a sub-Stones rock band called Ugly Rumours (incidentally, this is practically the only item calculated to make TB writhe with nervousness in interview). The remainder is padding: an absurdly long section on the leadership contest (the result always a foregone conclusion) stuffed with blow-by-blow accounts of the progress of Beckett and Prescott's scrap for the deputyship, the proceedings interspersed with arbitrary sidelights on Blair's pristine private life, the acoustic guitar that still lies in his Islington study, his love of good wine and food, his perusals of Trollope and George Eliot, etc. etc.

Poor Mr Sopel clearly had to write this in a *tremendous* hurry, and shows. In fact there are two styles on display here. The first half of the book is all robust cliché in which the voters "hold their noses" as Peter Mandelson, the party's communications chief, turns into "the stuff of legend"; while John Prescott, "cast into the outer darkness", natch, decides that Mandelson should "carry the can" for the 1987 election defeat.

The second half, presumably written with the motorcycle messenger waiting on the doorstep, is just syntactical slapstick. Thus, of Blair's relationship with Margaret Beckett: "It is one of Blair's features as a politician that he is not one to bear a grudge, even though he has had his fights along the way. He is more interested in whether someone is talented than whether they represent his strand of political opinion..." More revving from outside. The attempts at political scene setting — Mr Sopel is a BBC political correspondent, by the way — have the dogged simplicity of an Englishman trying to explain the laws of cricket to an American tourist.

Tony Blair: The Moderniser takes its place among such horrors of the genre as Christopher Hitchens and Peter Kellner's *Callaghan: The Road to Number Ten*. To do the author justice there is one good joke, in which Gerald Kaufman is characterised as liable to start a fight in an empty room, although Mr Sopel is sadly in error when he has Kaufman describing the 1983 Labour manifesto as "the longest suicide note in history".

Blair, by the by, comes across as thoroughly nice and principled, not above a bit of dissembling when the chips are down (see his 1983 parliamentary candidate's CV) and completely ruthless in the pursuit of power. But what on earth prompted Mr Sopel (who should be strongly advised not to give up the day job) to chronicle his life and times in this dismal fashion? One can only suppose that, like his subject's hankering after the Labour leadership, somebody had to do it.

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

☐ IT'S GOOD to know something works at the British Library, even if it's only the foul public relations department.

BL chairman Sir Anthony Kenny has certainly knocked the hype merchants into shape. He is the urbane figurehead who churns out casuistical comment in the *London Review of Books* while chief executive Brian Lang is kept under wraps to stop him putting his foot in it — like did at the heritage committee hearing last summer when he said of course BL didn't expect the treasury to put up more money to keep it all on one site at St Pancras.

The internal *St Pancras Progress* newsletter to staff in January announced that it would be the last issue: because book moves were so far off, and not progressing, St Pancras was delayed even further. The *Evening Standard* got wind of this and contacted the PR department, which simply denied the existence of the newsletter. In the end the story didn't run.

Meanwhile Radio Four's *Kaleidoscope* dedicated half an hour to the library; and the PR merchants, having learned the list of contributors, set about phoning each with encouragements to toe the party line — ie that all at St Pancras is rosy — even before producer Neil Trevithick had spoken to them. Presenter John Sutherland, amassing a convincing case against the direction in which the BL is being led by Stephen Dorrell, the useless heritage secretary, was to have included a paragraph on the insidious activities of the PR department, including producer Trevithick's comment that it was "more disabling than Sellafield". Sadly that paragraph was cut.

'Bookworm'

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
NOW I KNOW WHAT IT ALL MEANS...
SOPHIE'S WORLD
IT MEANS THERE'S SOMETHING TO PUT BESIDE THE STEPHEN HAWKING
SOPHIE'S WORLD
A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME
GOSH - HOW FRIGHTFULLY CLEVER!

REMAINDERS OF THE DAY: 2

THE BOOK: *Honour Among Thieves* by Jeffrey Archer.

THE HYPE: Lord Archole... leading storyteller of his Oxford PE class... worth every penny of his £14 million, three-book deal...

THE PRICE: Originally priced £14.99 by HarperCollins — now available at a knockdown £0.99 in Plymouth.

footnotes

FEAR IN THE COMMUNITY

HAPPIER DAYS: Ethel Empson with her grandchildren

QUANTUM Care Ltd, a non-profit organisation set up in 1992 to run 31 privatised old people's homes in Hertfordshire, was frightfully pleased with its first two years' progress.

Dr Elizabeth Thompson, who chairs the company, boasted about the "high quality care for our customers that is at the heart of the business"; and about "skilled and unstinting efforts" of the staff. Care and support staff were *up* by 6 per cent, salaries *up* by 50 per cent and the number of people paid more than £30,000 a year *up* from one to four.

On the basis of this prospectus and the attractive surroundings, Mrs Ethel Empson, a cheerful 85-year-old with a large and doting family, became a permanent resident at Quantum's Bulwer Lytton home last March. Almost at once she began to deteriorate. Her family suspected Mrs Empson wasn't being properly looked after, and complained.

Their complaints led to several meetings with managers and staff. The meetings heard disturbing reports. In October, for instance, a social worker reported: "Tanya had gone to sit Mrs Empson up to give her a sandwich and discovered that she was lying in faeces and urine and that faeces were encrusted under her nails. Tanya had rung for help but another 15 minutes went by before assistance arrived. There did not appear to be any carers in the bungalow during the 45 minutes that Tanya was there."

A month later, after a fall at the home, Mrs Empson was taken to hospital where she died in November. Even before she died her family urged the county council not to allow anyone else into the home. The council sent in an inspection team. Its report upheld the family's complaint on every point. It found:

"That the overall care of Mrs Empson was seriously inadequate and failed to safeguard her health and welfare. Staff at all levels lacked judgement, skill and management... The Bulwer Lytton was seriously understaffed which at times put all residents at risk."

After studying the duty rotas, the inspectors found that in April, August, September and October, the entire home, with 48 residents, was staffed by three people or less — far below the minimum necessary — *on more than 40 occasions*. For most of the time Mrs Empson was in the home there was no manager, and the new manager promptly vanished on six weeks' leave.

The inspectors concluded that "the proprietors have failed to safeguard the health and welfare of Mrs Empson, and consistently failed to provide adequate staffing, putting residents in jeopardy".

In other countries or professions, such conclusions might lead to criminal charges or at least mass sackings in management. But not at Quantum Care. David Brown, chief executive, is not resigning. "We deeply regret the situation which occurred at Bulwer Lytton House last year," he tells the *Eye*, "but this was an isolated incident which we had identified and were already dealing with when the inspection took place."

He concluded: "Your assumption that there was a 'quite shocking state of affairs at Bulwer Lytton' is not accepted and I therefore do not accept that the home's ownership and/or control needs to be changed".

Our Man in a Jam

■ HIS excellency Mr Andrew Bache CMG, Her Majesty's ambassador to Romania, will be a prestigious witness in the shocking case of Balfour v the Foreign Office, which finally comes to an industrial tribunal at the end of the month.

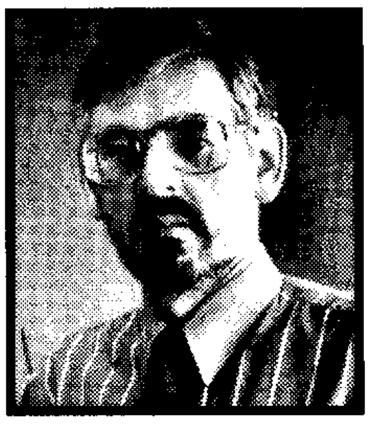
Andrew Balfour's story, which was set out in the *Eye* nearly a year ago (11 March 1994), concerns the time in 1989 when he was British consul in Dubai and was issuing visas to Britain.

In May1989, Balfour was bundled into a plane and taken to London, where he was interviewed interminably by FO officials and special branch without a single charge ever being put to him. "To this day," he tells the *Eye*, "I have no idea what they had against me." Three months later, in August 1989, he was arrested under the prevention of terrorism act (PTA) and accused of consorting with "a known terrorist".

The story of his arrest was leaked by MI5 to the *Daily Mail*, where it was faithfully printed on the front page. But the whole case against Balfour was a fantasy dreamed up by the intelligence services, and quickly evaporated.

Balfour was then released and an embarrassed attorney-general was obliged to announce that no charges would be made against him. There were no charges, either, against Mehrdad Ansari Shirazi, the "known terrorist", who had also been arrested under the PTA. He was given permission to reside permanently in Britain where he has two very lovely homes.

Did the FO bunglers reinstate or compensate Balfour? No: they suspended him and hauled him up before a disciplinary tribunal. The chairman of the tribunal, which sat for three days (in July and September 1990) was Andrew Bache; and one of its members was a Mr James Smith-Laittan. Both Bache and Smith-Laittan went to great lengths to say that they had not been in any way involved in Mr Balfour's case and had known nothing about it.



RUINED: Andrew Balfour

Whoops! A year earlier, on 2 June 1989, a Mr A. Ford of the foreign office security department wrote a long "secret and personal" letter to a select group of FO boffins setting out the Balfour case in highly prejudicial terms. The memo was sent to Andrew Bache, who was then working for the FO's personnel services department and was specifically asked for information about Balfour's allowances. Another long internal document, heavily biassed against Balfour, was sent on 9 June of that year to Smith-Laittan in the migration and visa department.

It will be worth a visit to the industrial tribunal at Croydon to observe how Excellency Bache and Mr Smith-Laittan reconcile these internal documents with their categorical assurances at the disciplinary board that they had had "no prior knowledge" of the Balfour case.

Bache, Smith-Laittan and Co recommended that Balfour should be sacked because his conduct had fallen short of the "unimpeachable integrity" required of foreign office officials. Andrew Balfour has not worked since. His life has been ruined by a laughable conspiracy theory invented by MI6. But all his attempts to extract from the FO documents to prove that the charges are baseless have been met with gagging orders (our old friends, the public interest immunity certificates) signed by freedom-loving, fair-minded foreign secretary Douglas Hurd.

Fair Shares

THE ENORMOUS fortunes made for stockbrokers, bankers, underwriters, speculators and their ilk in the sale of the government's remaining stake in the electricity industry is justified, as ever, by reference to the "widening spread of shareholders".

Here is a table showing the number of individual shareholders in the electricity companies at the time of the first company report after privatisation (1990 or 91) and the number now — or the latest available figure.

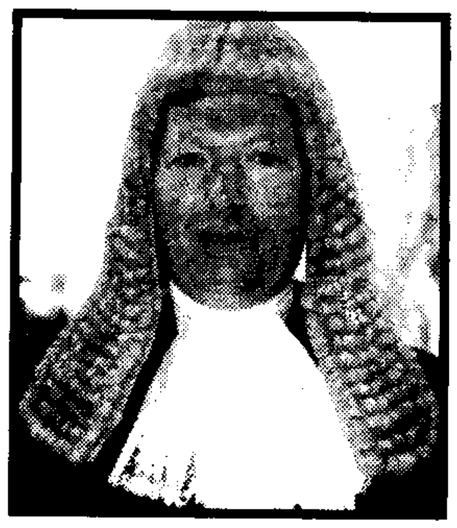
(The Eastern Group plc and Southern Electric will not disclose the figures.)

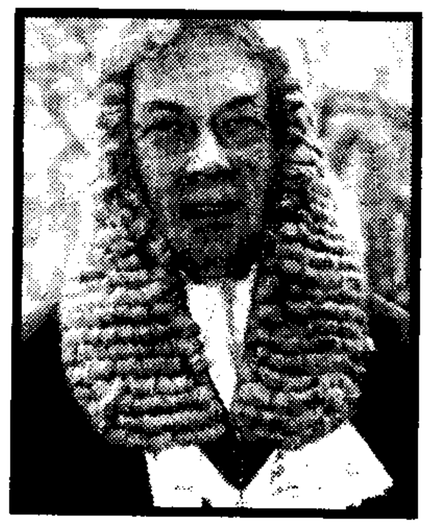
NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL SHAREHOLDERS

	1990 or '91	1994 or '95.
East Midlands	807,283	236,738
London	900,000	237,000
Manweb	420,000	116,000
Midlands	811,389	216,119
Northern	248,044	110,992
NORWEB	286,340	190,779
SEEBOARD	576,000	212,000
South Wales	127,220	85,450
South West	434,800	125,981
Yorkshire	800,000	193,000
Scottish Power	1,665,329	586,837
Powergen	1,098,233	565,000

A total of 8,164,638 individual shareholders has widened to a total of, well, just 2,875,896.

WIGS AND TORIES





PROMOTED: Sir Andrew (Collins) and Sir Gerald (Hosker)

■ **A SUBTLE device is being used to comfort top lawyers who might be criticised by the Scott inquiry: promotion.**

● ANDREW COLLINS had a stormy secret session with Scott on 16 June 1993. Scott wasn't impressed by Collins's performance as QC for customs and excise in the 1992 Ordtech case, where five businessmen were on trial for flogging an assembly line for artillery fuses to Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Collins told the Ordtech judge the prosecution had "no relevant documents" which would assist the defendants in their claim of government complicity in arming Saddam.

This was entirely false. There were several documents which showed the government turning a blind eye to the illegal Ordtech exports. Scott was not at all impressed with Collins's stumbling attempts to explain how documents which were quite plainly relevant were described by him as not relevant. One sharp exchange went as follows:

Scott: You did not say those documents were irrelevant did you?

Collins. Yes.

Scott: How *could* you?

Collins has just been appointed a high court judge and should from now on be referred to as Sir Andrew Collins or Mr Justice Collins... or as Lord Collins of Ordtech.

● GERALD HOSKER, top lawyer at the department of trade from 1987 to 1992, spent two torrid days at the Scott inquiry.

One of his jobs was to vet DTI officials' witness statements for the trial of three Midlands businessmen over illegal exports to Iraq — the Matrix Churchill trial. Tony Steadman, a senior DTI official, had asserted in his statement that the government did not know that machine tools from Matrix Churchill were going to arms factories in Iraq. Mr Steadman and Mr Hosker knew perfectly well that this was untrue. The government had indisputable evidence from intelligence sources that the tools were for arms factories. Steadman was advised that intelligence information could not be regarded as evidence. He asked Mr Hosker to confirm that this obvious nonsense was the correct legal position. Asked by Scott what advice he gave, Hosker replied: "The truthful answer, Sir Richard, is that I cannot confirm that I took any action." So the Steadman statement was signed and went forward to the trial with a conclusion which was wholly false. Scott and Hosker took part in the following unforgettable exchange:

Scott: The statement as it stands is junk, is it not?

Hosker: As a basic principle, but not necessarily total junk.

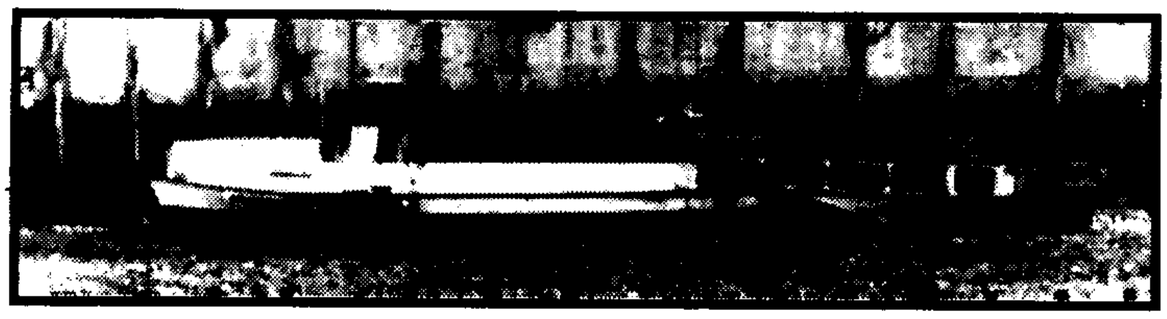
Hosker, who had already been promoted to treasury solicitor, got a knighthood in the new year's honours and should be referred to in future as Sir Gerald Hosker... or Lord Junk.

THE THINGS THEY SAY

"It is not because he is homeless that he was treated differently. It is because he had no address".

A spokesperson for the British Transport Police, commenting on the jailing of Thomas Compton, 18, who was arrested at Liverpool Street underground station without a ticket and without £10 to pay the fine.
Big Issue, 14th February.

Concrete Evidence



■ THE long and desperate cover-up over the 1989 Marchioness disaster in which 51 people drowned in the Thames after a dredger smashed into their pleasure craft comes to a climax at a new inquest on 13 March.

Coroner Burton will be faced by a battery of lawyers representing the company and the government. What about the families of the dead? When they asked the government to help with their legal costs, they were told to get stuffed. Why?

Two QCs for the families of British people killed in the Lockerbie disaster were paid by the taxpayer throughout a 4 month fatal accident inquiry. In November, Margaret Lockwood-Croft, whose son died on the Marchioness, wrote to the department of transport asking why they funded relatives' legal costs after Lockerbie but not after the Marchioness. The reply came from Viscount Goschen, 29, the minister for aviation and shipping: "The circumstances of Lockerbie were unique... it was a crime perpetrated by international terrorists."

This view was damaged a few days later by Lord Goschen's colleague, John Watts, minister for roads and railways. Watts revealed that the department of transport had also funded the legal costs of the relatives of the dead in the Kings Cross fire and the British Rail collision at Clapham, neither of which was caused by international terrorists. The department paid £240,522.50 for the Kings Cross relatives legal costs and stumped up most of the £947,044 which British Rail paid to lawyers of relatives bereaved at Clapham.

Shorn of the Goschen excuse, the secretary of state for transport, Mr Brian Mawhinney, rushed forward with another one. In a letter to Mrs Lockwood-Croft on 5 December, he came up with this:

"The facts relating to this deeply disturbing catastrophe are not a matter of dispute."

This is drivel. One expert who inspected the wreck at the time takes the strong view that the Marchioness was hit first in the stern, and then a second time amidships. This theory puts all the blame on the dredger. The dredger's owners argue, on the contrary, that the Marchioness suddenly swerved into the path of the dredger, and so brought about the disaster.

What can be the real reason for all these lies and evasions?

FACT: RMC (plc) — Ready Mixed Concrete — which owns the dredger company, has always been a generous contributor to the Tory party.

ANOTHER FACT: RMC's most famous director is former Tory MP Sir Neil Macfarlane, a golfing chum of Sir Denis Thatcher. Sir Neil was a minister of sport in Margaret Thatcher's government.

AMAZING INTELLECT: The Fourth Viscount Goschen

The Things They Spray

■ *THE STORY SO FAR:*
Since persisting with two complaints about British Airways food, former Scotland Yard detective John Gorman has been subjected to a fantastic dirty tricks campaign — including threatening and abusive calls (traced to British Airways security and Heathrow police station) and a visit from two thugs who sprayed poison in his eyes. Mr Gorman is suing BA. Now read on...

ON 5 FEBRUARY, John Gorman set out on a short sightseeing holiday in Israel. As he drove from his home he thought he was being followed. He parked his BMW in the Hilton car park at Heathrow.

On 8 February, in Tel Aviv he was handed two messages which had been phoned through from London. One "advised" him to drop his court action against BA. The other read: "Your car parked at Hilton Heathrow. Message: `No Win BA'. Regards ADI Heathrow Airport."

Mr Gorman was worried. His car had been paint-sprayed with the same slogan several months earlier. ADI stood, he knew, for Aviation Defence International, a large American-owned security firm hired by BA to operate at Heathrow, whose name had been used on a previous threatening fax. Gorman asked his hotel manager to contact the Hilton at Heathrow to check on the car, and immediately went to see the British consul in Tel Aviv, John Fielder.

In Gorman's presence, Fielder rang Heathrow police station who confirmed 25 minutes later that Gorman's car had not been damaged. Gorman returned in relief to his hotel -- only to be told that the car had indeed been paint-sprayed "No Win BA". This had been confirmed by the assistant manager of the Heathrow Hilton, Mr William Costley, who had even taken a photograph of the damaged car. When Gorman told the British consul about this, Fielder became extremely annoyed and promised to write an official report of the incident to the foreign office.

HARASSED: John Gorman

Scotland Yard confirmed to the *Eye* that, following "a request" from the British embassy in Tel Aviv, a police patrol inspected the Hilton car park, "noted several red BMW's, but could find no serious damage to any of them".

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 071 287 3183

In the City

FURTHER details are rumoured concerning the share dealing activities of Lord Archer's little Kurdish friend, Broosk Saib. It is suggested that Saib might also have bought shares in Yorkshire Television as well as benefiting from the £250,000 share deal the great storyteller carried out for him in Anglia Television just ahead of the takeover bid from MAI.

What is the significance of this, you ask? Well, when the Anglia share deal and its resulting near £80,000 instant profit were first disclosed, the Archer response was that he had given his pal Broosk two takeover tips: Anglia and Yorkshire. Furthermore, it is suggested that Saib was somewhat less successful with the YTV punt — Yorkshire was as much tipped to go in an ITV takeover spree as Anglia — than he was with Anglia. Indeed, he is said to have lost up to £20,000.

So, Archer innocent after all, you cry? Well, not quite. If the Yorkshire deal is true, why did Saib not deal through the same brokers when it came to buying Anglia shares in January last year? Charles Stanley, who did the Anglia deal at Archer's behest, had never heard of Saib until Archer told them he was the client. And if Saib dropped a bundle on Yorkshire, was the Anglia tip supposed to make it up to him? There are few better ways to ease a pain in the bank account than by dispensing a surefire winner. Especially one that pays off £80,000 in days, risk free and without even any money down — as a result of buying the shares for "new time" just before the bid.

All of which may explain why the great storyteller was so keen to help his Kurdish friend. But it may also once again encourage speculation about the nature of their relationship and common interests other than the Kurds. Interests, it is suggested, which may be shared by other well-connected City figures and which go beyond hot share tips.

Also, a cynic might suggest that buying shares in more than one company is often the way smart operators disguise a tip that is a little too hot. The small losers prove there was no inside information on the big winner. In the same way, certain people always explain to Stock Exchange investigators that they only bought shares because of what they read in a newspaper, say the *Sunset Times*.

IT WOULD appear there may still be some interesting and unexplored avenues concerning the life and times of the great pension plunderer Robert Maxwell.

Documents are said to be available indicating a previously unknown longtime business partnership with a prominent and politically connected international figure.

The documents are said to indicate that substantial pension fund assets and other moneys were used to purchase shares via offshore companies for Maxwell and his secret partner. It is even suggested that the sizeable profits from these deals might also still be available in Swiss banks to Cap'n Bob's creditors. On the other hand, the documents could be a hoax.

DESPITE GTECH's continued Teflon ability to slide away from allegations of impropriety in winning and keeping its dominant position in the US lottery business, the key player in Britain's national lottery operator Camelot still continues to attract official interest across the Atlantic.

A corruption case involving a former senior GTECH executive accused of taking kickbacks from lobbyists was recently thrown out by a Kentucky court. However, the executive faces another kickback case in New Jersey. And according to the *New York Times*, FBI agents from several states held a meeting last year to pool information and consider whether to open a broad-based investigation into GTECH's dealings with state officials. It is not clear whether any such investigation has been launched.

Meanwhile GTECH continues to deny any wrongdoing and so far no wrongdoing has been proved despite eyebrows being consistently raised by the company's employment of well-connected former officials of those states where it does lottery business.

DEPARTMENT OF REMARKABLE COINCIDENCE

***EYE* 859 revealed that Jack Sofier, a director of clothing group Helene, had been the subject of a Scotland Yard fraud squad investigation regarding multiple share applications in the privatised generating companies.**

It had been alleged that the names of employees of his company Gabicci had been used to purchase shares financed by Sofier. The investigation was ended in August last year as there was insufficient evidence to justify a prosecution due to recent changes in the law on multiple applications.

Issue 859 hit the City streets on 16 November. On 17 November with no publicity Jack Sofier resigned from the Helene board. Now there's a funny thing!

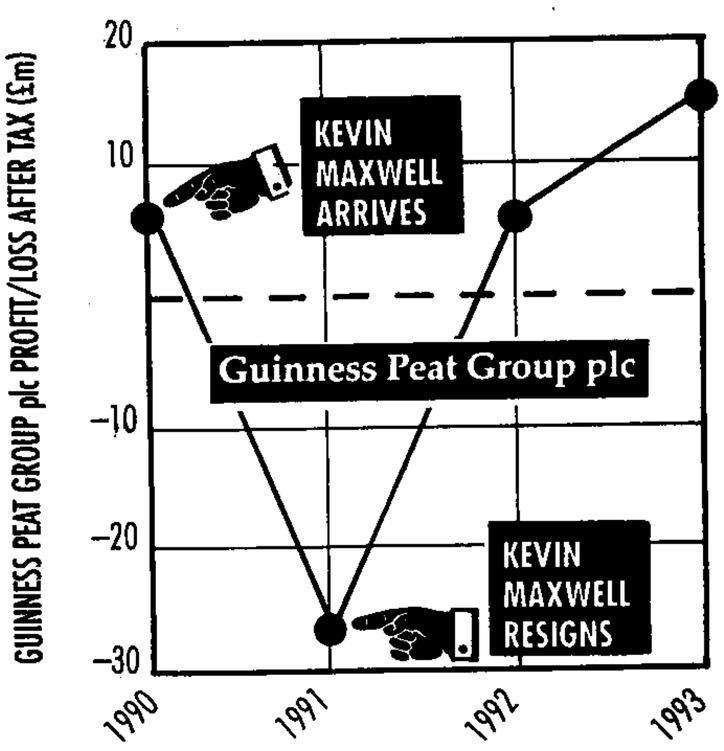
NOBODY ever accused Lonrho of being sparing when it comes to looking after its directors.

The recent annual report reveals that soon-to-go former chief executive "Tiny" Rowland had to struggle by on £1,557,000 last year while his arch enemy and successor, the once indivisible Dieter Bock, paid himself just under £700,000 to keep the wolf from the door. And the gang of Rowland cronies who finally departed last year — opening the door to Bock's putsch — left clutching £2,400,000 in compensation.

Lonrho not only pays well, but it also provides generously for its director's pensions. The company paid £100,000 towards Bock's pension out of total directors' pension contributions of £412,000 — down from £635,000 the year before. Indeed, some of those who recently left were at the end drawing not only six figure salaries but also six figure pensions!

However, this largesse does not appear to spread throughout the Lonrho empire. For almost two years members of the *Observer* pension fund — closed when Lonrho sold the loss-making Sunday to the *Guardian* — have been waiting to be told what pensions they will receive on retirement or the transfer value of their existing pension funds paid for from employee and *Observer* contributions.

British Management Part 12.
KEVIN MAXWELL, business consultant, director Guinness Peat Group plc 1990-1991.



Guinness Peat Group plc profit/loss after tax	
1990	£6.044m
1991	-£24.01m
1992	£6.172m
1993	£15.545m

Despite persistent demands and promises, no detailed information has been forthcoming. And even worse, some *Observer* employees — not highly paid hacks but administrative staff — who took early retirement have not received any pension.

The explanation — to the extent that there has been one from Lonrho, the trustees Coutts and lawyers Herbert Smith — has been that there is an unfortunate shortfall in the fund of up to 20 percent on the worst case calculation. This multi-million pound gap has been caused not by Maxwellian plundering but by a combination of factors including low interest and annuity rates plus poor performance. Nor was the situation helped by an earlier Lonrho decision to take a contributions holiday in order to boost profits/cut losses.

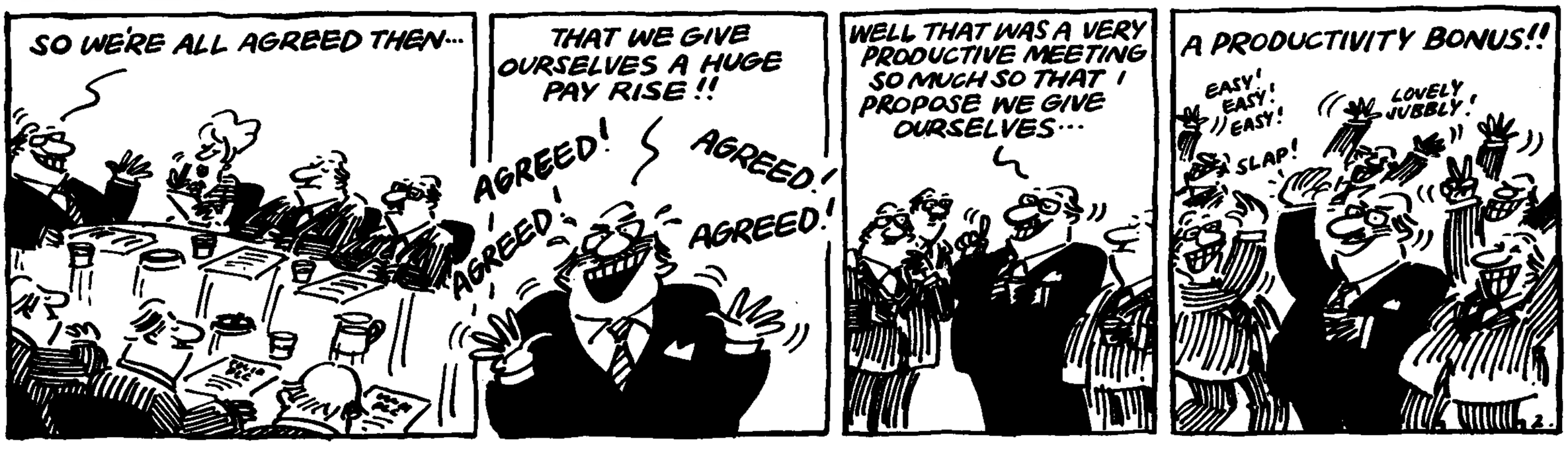
The fact that several hundred *Observer* pension fund members are no longer Lonrho employees seems to have discouraged any sense of urgency in dealing with the situation, despite the personal problems this has caused. Instead there have been vague assurances that any ultimate shortfall will be covered by Lonrho.

It would be very embarrassing for Bock and the other Lonrho fat cats if the forthcoming 24 March annual shareholder's gathering was used as a platform for irate *Observer* pension fund members to demand their legal rights.

'Slicker'

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE



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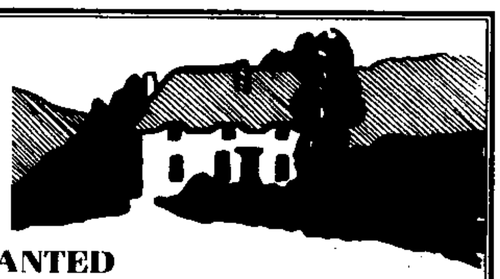

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Roger Lewis, Sunday Times

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